

# THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

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# The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor

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## ***“Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up” (1 Corinthians 8:1).***

*[Paul] was not condemning knowledge, but simply stating a truth. Knowledge of the right kind is excellent, but even that may tend to inflate the individual who possesses it. Men may be puffed up even by their knowledge of the Scriptures, especially if their reading has been ill-balanced. Much charity [love] is needed to guard against this evil and to make knowledge lead to edification. There are people who will say that it is only the dangerous ‘little knowledge’ that puffs men up, while those who have studied deeply are truly humble and never boast. This thought has been stated often, but it is not true. Indeed it would be difficult to define the words of such a saying. All the knowledge of mankind is only little. The most ignorant and the most cultured are only separated by a few degrees. It is quite true that intelligent people perceive the ugliness and folly of blatant boasting and so if they boast they do it more skillfully.*

*Islip Collyer,  
Principles and Proverbs, pp. 128, 129*

## Editorial

### Are the Current Natural Disasters a Sign of the End?

*"And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matt 24:6-8).*

#### The accepted view

Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and random violence have filled the news lately. We all probably know of someone who experienced travel problems due to the eruption in Iceland, and many marveled at the way our brother in Haiti survived the catastrophic earthquake there. The Japanese tsunami produced by the shift in the earth's crust early in 2011 in Japan still have ramifications that are being felt today, both economically (car production is still restricted in Japan) and environmentally (the nuclear reactor complex there is not yet totally under control). And the slaughter of the youth in Norway made headlines, coming as it did from a famously peaceful society. Probably these events have all been used in Christadelphian lectures and exhortations, some based on the words of Jesus above. The expectation of the imminent return of our Lord is emphasized, and merged with the words that follow on in verse 37: *"But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."* So it is common to point out the moral decay in North America and around the world as confirmation of the imminent return of our Lord. But it must also be pointed out that this type of exhortation, or this type of public address, is much less prevalent than it once was. A quick glance at the magazines from around a hundred years ago shows a much keener awareness of the "Signs of the Times" than is common today. Accounts of earthquakes, of famines, of outbreaks of disease, of moral decay, were all discussed in terms of their significance in demonstrating the imminent return of the Lord. This is not to deny such connections are made today, but their prevalence is not nearly so noticeable.

Even the armed conflicts of recent years, although they make headlines in our newspapers, pail into insignificance compared to the great conflicts of the twentieth century. WWII holds the distinction of destroying more lives, it is estimated, than any of the conflicts before and since. But, as a proportion of the world population, as we turn to pestilence, the black death of 1348 killed perhaps 50% of the population of Europe. The rise of HIV/AIDS is serious, but compared to this the number of deaths is quite negligible. If we remember all the concern about SARS in 1996, its actual toll was almost insignificant, with around 900 fatal cases. (I would like to acknowledge, however, that to the affected, even one death is a deep tragedy.) As to famine, millions are at risk in these times in Africa, at least partially due to regional armed conflict. But history records perhaps 30 million died from famine in China in the 1950's, an episode which made little impact in the Americas. The

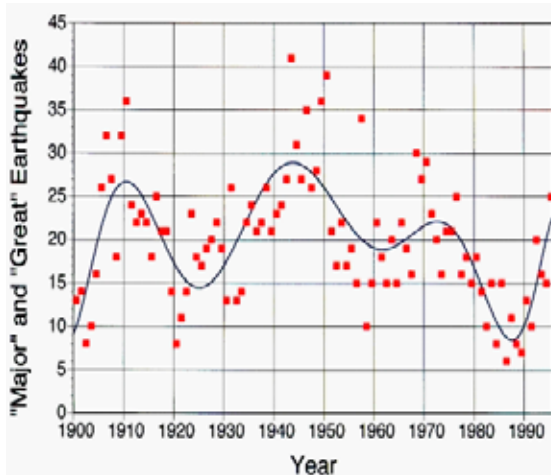
great Irish potato famine of the 1850's resulted in a population decline of perhaps 50%, much of it attributed to the emigration of those affected to America. .

### **Are Violence and Earthquakes Signs of the Return of Christ?**

Let us first consider violence, a topic of particular concern in the USA. We read of terrible episodes of random violence: the shooting of congresswoman Giffords in Arizona, the Columbine High School massacre, and the seemingly constant litany of similar events, and we worry. We say they are signs of increasing violence in the world, and relate them to events which will surround the return of Christ.

So is this, in fact, true? Let us consider the USA. It has a murder rate of around 5 per 100,000 at present, which is much higher than that in Canada (about 1.6) and England (1.2). So we have had about a 1% chance of dying by violence in the USA, from both domestic violence and wars combined in the 20th Century. But is this high by historical standards? Well, the best estimates show, for example, that 20% of the population perished by violence in what can be termed tribal times — a situation that can perhaps be seen to this day in parts of Africa. And the murder rate is recorded as being around 200 per 100,000 in Oxford in the UK in the 14th century, much higher even than in current day border towns in Mexico, an area most of my readers would not willingly travel to<sup>1</sup>. Even in recent years, a quick look shows the incidence of violence has decreased considerably of late. In the USA the murder rate has fallen from 9.8 in 1991 to 4.8 in 2010 (last year.) In fact, all rates of crime have fallen in the last ten years, despite the economic struggles of many. Thus, despite the many terrible crimes reported in the news, we in the USA are currently safer than at any time in the past forty years.

To turn to another area, the topic of the increase in Earthquakes has been subject to much discussion in our literature, with a seeming consensus that yes, such an increase is real and a sign that we are in the end times. But is there unequivocal evidence of this? Well, I am not an earthquake specialist — a profession that, incidentally, is perhaps subject to the major problem that earthquakes are almost



impossible to predict in any meaningful way. It is often claimed that there has been a recent increase in earthquakes, and indeed we have detected many more in recent years, and the trend is increasing. (Much of this is undoubtedly due to the proliferation of seismographs.) But are severe earthquakes increasing? I cannot myself detect a significant increase over

the last century from the count of earthquakes over magnitude 7.0 over the last 100 years, as shown alongside<sup>2</sup>.

### **What is the Current Situation?**

Well, to claim the recent episodes of violence or natural disasters, both in the Americas and the world, is a sure sign of the imminent return of our Lord is, at least in my opinion, doing damage to the available information. But what of the political earthquakes? As we customarily interpret the Book of Revelation, when we come across the term “earthquake”, we traditionally assign such episodes to certain events in history. For example, of the four earthquakes mentioned in Revelation, the first, in Chapter 6, is usually related to the political changes surrounding the reign of Constantine. In Rev 11:13, we read *“And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.”* This is normally taken to refer to the French revolution of the late 18th century, to which is ascribed the liberty the Western World is said to enjoy — although how much enjoyment such liberty affords might be debated. On the other hand, the earthquake of Rev 16:18 is usually taken to be yet future, when Christ will return in his glory to overthrow all the nations of this world. Whether it also refers to the great earthquake foretold by the prophet Zechariah is quite likely. *“And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee...”* (Zech 14:4-5).

Thus the great earthquakes foretold in the book of Revelation refer to events in the political earth, at least most probably. And even the Olivet prophecy in the passage from Matthew above clearly refers primarily to the fall of Jerusalem, which certainly greatly shook the Jews, but not by any recorded physical earthquakes.

So what of ourselves? Are we to read about literal earthquakes, and violent episodes, and proclaim them as sure and certain signs of the long hoped for return of our Lord? Or are to look for signs in the Political Earth, such as the turmoil in the Middle East? Perhaps I am wrong, but I believe that it is the latter events that are the surer sign of the coming of Christ. There have been many violent earthquakes over the centuries, and countless wars, but for the current changes in the Middle East there is no true precedent. Even the withdrawal of Turkey “The Drying up of the River Euphrates”, was of a small impact compared to the simultaneous upheavals in Syria, Jordan, Libya and Egypt. How much further these effects will spread, and the impact on Israel and its land, is hard to predict, but certainly the Jews of the land are facing a changed world — as we are. So are physical earthquakes increasing? Is violence on the rise? I am not sure of this — but I am sure there are political earthquakes all around Israel at present.

The exhortation is real, that we are to look for signs of the sure return of our lord Jesus. But we ought not to do so using anecdotal evidence of “natural” or human disasters pulled from the headlines. I am personally inclined to put more respect in peace as a sign of the coming: *“And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwallled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates,”* (Ezek 38:11). The world might be getting safer, but the nations around about Jerusalem are arming themselves with nuclear weapons. Safety in the short term might cause us to relax our guard, but *“For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night”* (1Thess 5:2).

Peter Hemingray

**Notes:**

1. See, for example, “The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence has Declined” by Steven Pinker
2. Data from the USGS — who have a nice FAQ on “Has earthquake activity been increasing?”

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***“There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
the holy place where the Most High dwells”(Psalm 46:4).***

*Through the pages of the Bible flow two very different streams. The raging torrent, the seasonal river overflowing its banks, is used by Isaiah as a figure for the great Assyrian army advancing upon little Judah (Isa 8:7,8). The waters thereof roar and are troubled; proud billows and lashing waves, high as hills, sweep aside mountains in their path (Psa 46:3). But in their tumultuous course the wild waters come at last against the immovable height of Zion (Psa 125:1): “This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt” (Job 38:11).*

*For here, beneath Zion’s hill, flows another stream that is the secret of her survival. It is not harsh and overpowering; its waters flow gently and softly (Isa 8:6) through the rock-hewn channels of Hezekiah’s conduit (2Kgs 20:20) into the pool of Siloam (John 9:7). This stream brings life to thirsty watchmen on Zion’s walls. In its silent, unerring course it symbolizes the sure and certain purposes of God. Its whispering waters speak in a still, small voice of the blessings of faith in God. This is the river of life, the streams which make glad the city of God. God is in the midst of Jerusalem; God will watch over her, and at last save her (Psa 46:4,5,11).*

*Let us drink from this peaceful stream. Its quiet waters will restore our souls and bring us inward peace in the midst of Last Days troubles.*

George Booker

## Exhortation

### The Body of Christ — The Ecclesia

1st Corinthians 12 talks about the ecclesia and compares it to a body. All of the members of the ecclesia come together as one unified body.

A human body is made up of many different parts. These various parts differ one from another, but they all have a necessary role in the body. This applies to us as members of a group of believers. We are all joined together as one unit. Also, we have been baptized into a special relationship with Christ. Paul explains it this way: *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1Cor 12:13).*

Paul also explains in verse 13 that we come from all kinds of backgrounds. Back in Christ’s day and in the time of the early ecclesia the biggest difference would have been between Jew and Gentile. But there was also the slave and the free. You had different kinds of men and women joining together as one in service to Christ and to his Father. We also come from various backgrounds, various races, different levels of income, and different levels of education. But none of those things matter as we join together as the body of Christ. *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).*

Some people have been raised in a home where there was knowledge of the Truth. Some have attended Sunday school and been associated with Christadelphians their whole life. There are also some who came to the knowledge of the Truth later in life and were converted. Whether you have been baptized for 50 years or for 5 months, all of us are part of the body. That is a very beautiful concept to me. We are all parts, but we are not all identical parts, we can’t be, we shouldn’t be. This is touched on as follows: *“If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were and eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?” (1Cor 12:15-17).* And also *“And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.” (1Cor 12:21).*

All parts are important. There are some parts of a body that are more prominent; the eyes, the hands, the feet, they are the more obvious parts. But that doesn’t mean that they are the most important parts. There are parts of the body that are not even seen, but they are essential for life. There are vital organs in our body that even though they aren’t seen, they are what keep our bodies functioning and healthy. As a matter of fact, if you had to choose, they are the more important parts of the body as far as surviving is concerned. You could potentially lose your eyes, ears, hands or feet and still live. It certainly would not be easy, but it is possible.

You couldn't lose your heart, lungs, or kidneys and keep on living. In the body of the ecclesia, many things are done behind the scenes that may not be noticed, but they are crucial for the function of the ecclesia.

### **Parts of an Ecclesia**

Sometimes the most obvious things in an ecclesia are considered the most important. The good speakers among us might be given more prominence than other members, but it shouldn't be that way! Consider the arranging brethren. They aren't the rulers of the ecclesia, rather they are servants. There is no glamour in that job. Often, the things that the arranging brothers meet to discuss are very unpleasant matters. They have the responsibility of making decisions that hopefully will help the body survive. They are a part, but not the most important part of the body. Nor should they consider themselves more important. There isn't room for a superior attitude, there isn't room for envy. We all have different abilities, different talents, and different potentials. We should acknowledge one another's strengths, because we all have our different areas of ability. When all of these various strengths are brought together, it makes for a healthy ecclesia.

The first part of 1Cor 12 talks about the different gifts that the early believers might possess. The gifts of the Holy Spirit could be manifested in a number of ways. It could be wisdom, healing, working of miracles, prophesy, speaking in tongues, or the interpretation of tongues to name a few. Not one of these gifts was considered more important than any of the others. They were all equally important. Why is that? Because they all, in their own way, were useful as a witness to show the power and glory of God. It wasn't to glorify the person who had the gift. It was to glorify the one who gave the gift, God.

So it is with an ecclesia today. We don't have the gifts of the Holy Spirit today, but we all have different talents, that when brought together and used correctly, gives glory to God. Rom 12:3-10 describes the differing gifts and how they are to be used. In the NIV verse 9 reads "*Love must be sincere*" rather than "*Let love be without dissimulation*" as read in the KJV. We are not to think too highly of ourselves, but at the same time we are to take seriously our various jobs and positions within the body so that we can do the best job possible. If a responsibility is laid upon us, then it's our duty to try our utmost to handle that responsibility.

If we don't have love, then it doesn't matter what gift or talents we have. 1Cor 13 talks about the importance of love. The first verses describe gifts and qualities that would have been very admirable to possess. If one had gifts of the Holy Spirit, but no love, then it was worthless. If one were to give everything to the poor or even give themselves up as a martyr, but had no love, it would be meaningless.

Today, if a member is an outstanding speaker, or a strong Bible student able to delve into the deepest recesses of the Word, but has no love, it's nothing. If a member has a so called "position of authority" without love, it's all a waste of time. With love an individual will put others first.

If we were all exactly the same, what kind of ecclesia would you have? The examples of the different parts of the body are used in 1Cor 12. If all of the body were made



of eyes, how could it hear? If it were all ears, how could it smell? If we all had the exact talents, taste, likes and dislikes it wouldn't be a good thing. If everyone was exactly like me, then we would probably end up not getting much accomplished. Fortunately, we're all different.

## **Learning to Fit Together**

Sometimes these differences cause us to become frustrated with each other. Our different opinions and viewpoints can cause contention among us. More often than not, our differences contribute to the well-being of our ecclesia. An excellent example of this is our group Bible discussions. We discuss a portion of the scripture and weigh in on the discussion. Everyone has a slightly different angle on a subject. This helps to bring out things that might not come out otherwise. Even if someone brings up a point that you don't agree with, it at least makes you think. So our differences can actually strengthen us as a group and individually.

1Cor 12:18 talks about God's role in the arrangement of the body. KJV *"But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him."* NIV *"But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as He wanted them to be."* We know that God formed our natural bodies so that many different parts function together. In the ecclesial body, isn't it the same? Our heavenly Father has put us here all together for a reason. We need to learn how to work together and learn together, to rejoice together and be sad together.

We all have to learn how to fit into our diversity of roles in the ecclesia. We sometimes may complain about our role, but we shouldn't. It could be that God put you in a position because you have a knack for that particular job, even if it's not the most enjoyable job in the world. It also could be that, in some cases, God puts you in a situation to help develop something in you that you would never naturally develop on your own. It often takes us out of our comfort zone. A good example might be the writer of this exhortation. I get nervous about speaking before my own ecclesia. 1Cor 12:26 reads *"And whether one member suffer, all members suffer with it."*

In our natural bodies, if we have a problem with one part of our body, it can affect the rest of our body. Have you ever injured your lower back? It makes you feel bad all over. It affects the way you walk, the way you sit, the way you sleep. It has a bearing on just about every aspect of your life. So it is with the ecclesia if one member is suffering. The rest of the body suffers as well. If one member is ill, injured, or suffers loss we all feel that pain. That is because of the love we have for each other. If someone you love is hurting, it makes you hurt.

Some of our members who are the most loving and sympathetic, are the brother or sister who have suffered a lot of illness and adversity in their own lives. Perhaps they can more readily identify with others' suffering because of what they've been through, and they know first-hand that it's a bad place to be. To me that is Christ like behavior in the purest form. In many ways, the days ahead will become tougher for the body of Christ.

We have to work hard to remain together in unity. The immorality of this world is becoming more of a problem every day. Some of it is very subtle. We have to be very careful to keep ourselves separate from the world around us as much as possible. Unfortunately, sometimes we lose a member of this body and it is very saddening. Some will succumb to the temptations of the world and fall away. Some will lose the desire to be a part of the body and slowly fade away. But what remains of the body has to continue on in faith, working together as a unit to get this body ready for the kingdom. The glue that binds this body together is love. It is the most important thing. When we partake of the emblems, let us really think about the love of Christ. His love for us was so great that he endured torture and death to open a way for salvation.

Now, there might be a danger of becoming complacent if we start to think that we have our little role in the ecclesia and that is all we need to do. That could impede personal growth. That's not the point. The point that I hoped to get across, is the idea of a diversified group of people coming together and working together as a strong unit, with the sum of the parts being greater than the individual parts. And also that no one should feel insignificant in their ecclesia. You are all important! Never forget that your ecclesia needs you; also never forget that you need your ecclesia.

Joe Hill (Austin Leander, TX)

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## Love and Tolerance

*Love will lead us to tolerance. We humans are by nature and practice intolerant creatures. Differences in others are repellant to us. Even those of us who love non-conformity nurture a desire to conform others to ourselves. This is especially true within those social subcultures where [doctrine] is taken seriously. Certainly there are breaches of [standard beliefs] and [standard practices] which must merit our stern [disapproval], and, if not repented of, must receive our censure and rejection. This is Christian. But when censure and rejection are among our most immediately apparent traits, as individuals or as churches, something is sadly amiss. We must show tolerance for one another out of the motivation of love (Eph 4:1)... In matters not directly related to the faith and life of the gospel, freedom in a non-threatening environment must predominate. There must be no contempt; there must be no judgmentalism. There must be love. There must be tolerance. Or to illustrate it in another way: It is not just the smart members of a church who have something to say to the life and direction of that church.*

*Those members who are not so cerebral, but who pray and who listen to the voice of the Spirit in the Scriptures have something vital to contribute to the church's life and health. This is surely in keeping with Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 12. Tolerance will lead us to respect one another.*

Thomas N. Smith, "Christian Unity",  
Reformation and Revival, 8:3, pp. 63-65

## Bible Study

### **“As it was in the Days of Noah” (10) “Go forth of the ark”**

In the previous article in this series, we considered Noah's willingness to remain in the ark because God had not directed him to leave even though he could see dry land around him. Noah's subsequent actions indicate that he was truly appreciative of God. On the 27th day of the second month, God told Noah to leave the ark and to bring the animals with him (Gen 8: 14–17). Noah obeyed. And the next thing he did was to build an altar to God. On that altar, he sacrificed one of every clean animal on the ark as a burnt offering (Gen 8: 20).

The fact that he offered burnt offerings is significant. The burnt offering is described in Leviticus 1 with further details given in Lev 6, 7. A characteristic of the burnt offering was that almost all of the animal's body was burnt on the altar. This was in deliberate contrast to the body of an animal given as a sin offering. When sin offerings were made, most of the animal's body was not placed upon the altar. The head of the sin offering, symbolizing thoughts dedicated to sin, the legs of the animal, representing actions given to sin, and the animal's skin, representing the flesh generally, were all excluded from the altar. God did not want any of that. In fact, God decreed that those parts of the animal be cast away with the animal's dung. (That shows us just what God thinks of our evil thoughts and actions.)

Almost all of the body of an animal sacrificed as a burnt offering was given to God symbolically by being burnt on the altar. The Law specified that first the animal's head, then its fat, and then the rest of its flesh were placed on the altar. The burnt offering, therefore, symbolized complete dedication to God. It was an appropriate offering for Noah to make. (He is actually the first person in the Bible recorded as having made a burnt offering to God.) The people of the antediluvian world had been dedicated to serving themselves. By offering burnt offerings, Noah signaled his intention to dedicate himself to serving God in the new start that he and his family had been given.

Noah had been in the ark for one year and ten days. During that time, he had given a lot of care to the animals and probably developed a fondness for many of them. But that did not keep him from voluntarily offering one of each of the clean animals in sacrifice to God. The fact that he was willing to sacrifice those animals is an indicator that his greatest affection was for God. It showed that he esteemed God much more than the result of his own labor.

And God was pleased with Noah's offering. We read:

*“And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done” (Gen 8:21).*

## **“Be fruitful, and multiply”**

And God blessed Noah and his sons. The blessing that he gave them sounds familiar: *“And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth”* (Gen 9:1). It is an echo of the words that God spoke to Adam and Eve: *“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth”* (Gen 1:27-28).

There are a number of similarities between the blessing given to Adam and Eve and the one given to Noah and his sons. Both were told to replenish the earth and both were given dominion over the animals. Both were given commands about what they could and could not eat. These similarities indicate that the world after the Flood was like a new creation.

But there were also some important differences between the words spoken to Adam and Eve and those spoken to Noah and his sons. Noah and his sons were also informed that the animals would fear them (Gen 9:2); they received a command about the blood of the animals killed for food (Gen 9:4), and they were told that God would judge murderers (Gen 9:5,6). These additional statements reflected the fact that the creation they inherited was going to be a much more savage place than the one that Adam and Eve had initially received. The difference, of course, was sin. Sin had not entered the world when God spoke to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1. So, there was no need to discuss fear or blood. But sin ruins everything. Indeed, the world will not return to the way it was in the Garden of Eden until sin is suppressed under the Lord Jesus Christ. Then the words of Isaiah will be fulfilled: *“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them”* (Isa 11:6).

There was certainly no terror or bloodshed there. And that is a fact that it is important for us to remember, especially when it comes to our entertainment choices. Violence stems from sin, and one of the benefits of Christ’s return is the end of it. So, it certainly does not seem to be the best idea for believers to be entertained by graphic depictions of violence.

God repeated His blessing to Noah and his sons in Gen 9: 7. Although the Flood had brought destruction to the old world, it had meant salvation to them. They probably would have eventually been swallowed up in the confusion of the antediluvian’s way of life (or slain by wicked men) if they had not been delivered from it by the Flood. The Flood gave them a new start, and God wanted them to use it to be fruitful and to multiply: *“And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein”* (Gen 9:7).

Peter states that the Flood was like baptism: *“Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of*

the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1Pet 3:20-21). Peter’s words make it clear that Noah and his family were saved by the Flood. It wiped away the folly of the old world and made a new life possible for them.

The same opportunity has been given to us. Baptism into the Lord Jesus Christ is like a Flood covering for the error of our ways. It is the opportunity to wipe away the old world that we used to know. It gives us a new start. It makes us a new creation in Christ: “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*” (2Cor 5:17). Baptism, like the Flood, is a necessary step to a new beginning. And it should be followed by being fruitful and bringing forth abundantly to the glory of God. That is our calling.

### **“The saving of his house”**

Heb 11 declares that Noah was a hero of faith: “*By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith*” (Heb 11:7). This verse shows that not only did Noah save himself, but he also saved his family as well. Hebrews 11 refers to them as “his house.” Noah’s salvation of himself as well as others is one of the ways in which he prefigured the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, those who will be saved by Christ are referred to as his “house” in Heb 3: “*But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end*” (Heb 3:6).

Noah’s sons were named Shem, Ham, and Japheth. “Shem” means “name.” He is the father of the people of the Middle East. Abraham and the Jewish people are descended from him. (When a person does not like Jewish people, he is called an “anti-Semite.” The word “Semite” is derived from the name “Shem.”) God intended for His Name to be declared through the descendants of Shem, so the fact that their forefather’s name means “name” is fitting: “*For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear*” (Jer 13:11).<sup>1</sup>

The name “Ham” is identical to the Hebrew adjective that means “to be hot” or “to enflame.” He is regarded as the father of the families from the warm regions of Africa.

The name “Japheth” is derived from the word “enlarge” used in the prophecy about him: “*God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant*” (Gen 9:27). His name conveys the idea of expansion. He is considered the father of the Europeans and the Asians, whose domain has expanded to cover much of the globe, just like this prophecy said would happen.

### **“Behold, I establish my covenant with you”**

God established a covenant with Noah, with his sons and their descendants, and with the animals after they left the ark (Gen 9: 9-10). He said that He would never again destroy the earth with water: “*And I will establish my covenant with you;*

*neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth” (Gen 9:11).*

God is unwavering in His commitment to this covenant. In fact, when He wanted to express how determined He is to re-gather Israel with mercy, He stated that His level of commitment to doing so is the same as it is to keeping His covenant with Noah: *“For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have **sworn** that the waters of Noah should no more go **over the earth**; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee” (Isa 54:7-10).*

### **“I do set my bow in the cloud”**

God demonstrated His dedication to His covenant with Noah by giving the rainbow as a token of it. The rainbow is an ideal symbol for this covenant because it is formed by sunlight hitting particles of rain in the sky after a storm.

The rainbow is also a visual depiction of God’s plan to fill the earth with His glory. It is a representation of us as immortals reigning with Christ in the coming Kingdom. In fact, Revelation uses the rainbow in a symbol of Christ and the immortalized saints in the future. *“And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: **and a rainbow was upon his head**, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire” (Rev 10:1).*

So, why does the rainbow make sense as a depiction of Christ and the saints ruling in the Kingdom? The sun’s light is necessary for a rainbow to form, and the Lord Jesus Christ is referred to as the sun in Malachi: *“But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall” (Mal 4:2).* So, the future depicted by the symbol of the rainbow will be a reality when the Lord Jesus is reigning in Jerusalem and the light he provides will enlighten the world.

The benefits of Christ’s reign are described as being like nourishing rain: *“He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth” (Psa 72:6).* So, when he is ruling as king, there will be both sunlight and rain, which are necessary for a rainbow to be seen.

God declared that the rainbow would be formed in the clouds: *“I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth” (Gen 9:13).* Clouds are a symbol of believers (Heb 12:1). So, the rainbow is a reflection of the glory of God seen in believers. Indeed, the colors of the rainbow are displayed when the pure white light of the sun is split when it encounters particles of rain in the air. When the saints are immortals ruling as kings and priests in the Kingdom, we will be in the political heavens according to the symbolic language of Revelation. We will be like little particles of water that share God’s doctrine with the world. *“My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as*

*the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God” (Deut 32:2-3).* And like raindrops in the sky, we will project some of the light of Christ. Although we will each make individual contributions, our collective work will all be for one purpose, which is the glory of God. Everything we do will come together to give illumination and warmth to the earth, just like the colors of the rainbow together comprise the light of the sun. That wonderful depiction of our hope is conveyed in this symbol that is inextricably linked to the life of Noah, a man who was faithful in the perilous times at the end of the age in which he lived. *(Series concluded)*

Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD)

Notes:

1. The Hebrew word translated “name” in this verse is *shem*.

## Bible Study

### Creation’s Gospel

#### (2) The Principle of God Manifestation

Our premise is that the two forms of divine expression agree completely at every layer of examination. These two divine expression formats are the written word of God (Bible) and the spoken word of God (creation). The terms and features of creation confirm the truths and principles in the Bible, from the vastness of the universe down to molecular structures, chemical compositions and even mathematical relationships. The Creator ‘spoke’ and light came out of darkness. Our planet responded to the Creator’s verbal command with rising land masses and sinking oceans. Stars with all their mass, fuel, and gravitational relationships multiplied throughout space at the Creator’s spoken directive. Countless species of vegetation, animals, fowl and fish appeared upon the verbal summons of the Intelligent Designer, with all their appropriate relationships and interdependences intact. Our God is not a mere manipulator of a universe greater than Himself. Yahweh spoke, and our incredibly diverse, complex, balanced and interdependent environment became a reality over a very appropriate six nights and six days.

#### The Things That Have Been Made

The validation of divine truths and principles through the examination of the terms and features of creation eliminates any claims of illegitimacy for the judgments against the unenlightened. *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (Rom.1:18-20).* This is one of the foundational statements in Paul’s eight chapter discourse on the subject of atonement to the Roman Ecclesia. Paul emphatically states that the things that have been

made (creation) declare truths about our Creator. No one is guiltless. Everyone is responsible to God's judgments. However not all are individually accountable.

King David recognized this validation of divine truths by creation's testimony. *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard"* (Psa 19:1-3). The heavens communicate divine glory and divine knowledge. Their testimony is universal, but only registers with the hearing ears and seeing eyes of those who are circumcised in heart.

## **Multitudinous Singularity**

The first issue to address between the mirrored testimonies of scripture and creation, between the written word and the spoken word, would be the alpha and omega foundational principle of God manifestation. Creator manifestation is the original design template and the ultimate result. Our Heavenly Father projects Himself through features of creation, angels, prophets, kings, the kingdoms of men, the faithful and especially His beloved son. The ultimate plan is for peace, which should be understood as the presence of divine harmony. This divinely expressed definition is diametrically opposed to the popular misconception of peace being the absence of disturbance or the absence of conflict. The defining feature of God manifestation is a multitudinous singularity: that is when many independent components blend perfectly into a single, interdependent functioning singularity. This is the philosophical concept of synergy, where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Divine projections of the concept of God manifestation include:

- the design of the human body
- the institution of marriage
- the family unit
- the written word of God
- ecological integrity (the one-ness of nature)

Each of these examples demonstrate the principle of a multitudinous singularity. The family unit would be the most obvious example of multitudinous unity. A man and a woman become one through love and marriage. The wife customarily takes the name of the husband, by divine example. This is demonstrated in baptism where we (the Messiah's bride) take the family name. *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"* (Matt. 28:19). It is a single name for the whole family into which we are baptized, just as the wife and children all take the name of the father and husband in a family. The love of the husband and wife produce new manifestations of themselves. It is a single family made up of individual but interdependent members. This is the concept of God manifestation, the alpha template and the omega conclusion.

## **Everything Affects Everything Else**

Bible truths exhibit this same cohesive singularity made up of numerous interdependent features. Nothing in scripture is completely isolated. Everything affects



everything else. Have you experienced the frustration of trying to present or defend just a single feature of the gospel truth to the defensively unenlightened? If we address the inherent mortality of man as opposed to the immortality of the soul, the conversation can quickly degrade in to a series of “what about” challenges. If there is no immortal soul then what about going to the kingdom in heaven when we die? ... and what about hell and what about a fallen, evil angel? No part of divine truth is separate from all the other parts of divine truth. It is a single unit comprised of many interdependent parts.

This principle is also true of creation. Even godless mankind recognizes this feature of nature. We use the term ‘nature’ reluctantly, as it is the cowardly, defensive term employed by humanity in order to distance themselves from the moral responsibilities associated with using the more accurate term of ‘creation’. However, we are referencing the thought process of the flesh and therefore use the term ‘nature’ in that context. Mankind has learned over the last few generations that everything in nature is interconnected and interdependent. Our global ecosystem is a single unit comprised of many interdependent components. The concept of global warming is a feature of this understanding. The continual elimination of wetlands destroys the integrity of our current ecological balance. The continual burning and cutting of countless square miles of Amazonian jungles diminishes the replenishment of oxygen necessary for sustaining life around the globe. This multitudinous singularity (God manifestation) is the foundational platform for maintaining Bible truths as well as ecological integrity. Everything affects everything else because every individual component is interconnected into a single unity.

Our next commentary will address how of the creational glory of our Heavenly Father can be seen in how the construction of the universe perfectly parallels the divinely appointed construction of the Kingdom of God at Sinai.

*Jim Dillingham (Granite State, NH)*

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## ***The World is an Ongoing Creation***

*I used to envy the father of our race, dwelling as he did in contact with the new-made fields and plants of Eden; but I do so no more, because I have discovered that I also live in “creation’s dawn”. The morning stars still sing together, and the world, not yet half made, becomes more beautiful every day... This grand show is eternal. It is always sunrise somewhere; the dew is never all dried at once; a shower is forever falling; vapor ever rising. Eternal sunrise, eternal sunset, eternal dawn and gloaming, on seas and continents and islands, each in its turn, as the round earth rolls.*

*John Muir*

## ***Tidings on Facebook***

*There is a now a Facebook page for the **Tidings**. Hosted by Bro. Levi Gelineau, it currently posts the Daily Readings along with some other comments. In future we hope to add relevant News and Notices, so please “Friend” this page. (Bro. Levi can be contacted at [leviandjessica@gmail.com](mailto:leviandjessica@gmail.com).)*

## Bible Study

### The Creation Text: Studies in Early Genesis

#### Introduction to a series of excerpts from a new book

From its outset, Genesis enthalls with the vast scope of its subject matter. The creation account conveys the origin of the universe, Earth and life upon it, the origin of humanity, sin, forgiveness, justice, and evil. It introduces God the Creator and humanity the destroyer. What might that pristine world have been like? Just how was it that Adam and Eve made the fateful choice to eat the forbidden fruit?

Although the subject matter is well-known, the first four chapters of Genesis have received far too little critical analysis. Study of the text of early Genesis is repeatedly hampered by three persistent problems, one external to the text, and two internal. The external problem has to do with the physical outworking of the creative program. When did it all happen? How long were the days? How does Genesis relate to current science (or conversely, how can science be accommodated in the light of Genesis)? These are issues external to the text; the text does not address these matters. I take the Hebrew account of early Genesis as is, hence the title, *The Creation Text*. I have set aside consideration of external matters to focus solely on the text itself. These external issues are ultimately insoluble. As people speculate about how the Bible and Science ought to match up, careful analysis of the Bible text goes largely ignored.

That brings us to the two internal issues: lack of appreciation of the structure, and persistent misconceptions or partial truths that have achieved widespread acceptance but don't hold up under careful inquiry. As to appreciation of the structure of the text, early Genesis holds a unique place among ancient creation accounts. It is succinct, ordered, strictly monotheistic, prosaic, teleological (moving toward a goal), sequential, and reverential. It carries much content in few words because the text relies not only in the meaning of the words themselves, but in their arrangement: in the sequences, the dyads and triads, the opposites, the appositions, and the series. For instance, the creation of Adam, climactic as it is, gains even more focus when you realize it is the culmination of several uses of the words for "earth" and "ground." Also, a keen eye for the structure reveals a latent meaning of "the image and likeness of God." Placing Gen 1:1-2 in the overall structure of Genesis as a whole shows that the Prologue to the creation account is to be read as a genealogical statement. One of my main goals in writing the book is to unpack the structure of early Genesis.

Early Genesis is one of the most familiar sections of Scripture, but many common ideas about these chapters don't wear well under close, critical examination. Some examples:

- The Bible does not describe Adam and Eve's created nature as "very good."
- They did not pass blame after they sinned.

- Genesis 2 is not a repeat of the general creation account given in different terms.
- The serpent did not question God or cause Eve to question God.
- There is not nearly enough appreciation for the subtleties and complexities of the temptation process. The placing of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil off limits is not a mere test of obedience; it establishes the basis upon which Adam can form a proper relationship with God.
- The Cain and Abel account has far deeper significance than the material content of each brother's offering.
- The consequences of Adam and Eve's transgression are different from the punishment God had originally stated.

I do not shy away from reshaping or rejecting ideas that lack support within the text itself, especially when alternative interpretations harmonize better with a basic understanding of Bible truth.

For the next several months, God willing, *The Tidings* will publish excerpts from *The Creation Text*. The book runs about 350 pages and contains 49 studies. Some of the studies focus on a specific theme, some cover one verse, and others cover a few verses. All of Genesis 1-4 is treated in great detail. Some other studies cover broad themes running the entire book of Genesis. The content is primarily exegetical and expositional, but there are also devotional and exhortational sections.

With great thankfulness and gratitude to our Heavenly Father I have been able to complete this work that reflects some 30 years of investigation of early Genesis and many years of writing. I hope you will find these studies stimulating and challenging. Whatever you decide concerning my position on certain issues, I hope this book will raise your awareness of the magnificence and inspiration of the Genesis creation account.

## (1) The Greatest Sentence Ever Written

*"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."*

The Bible's first verse reigns majestically supreme over all other writings just as God reigns majestically supreme over all creation. While we cannot compare mere written words with the realities those words represent, we can compare the Genesis narrative with other texts. No other writing, ancient or modern, so elegantly delivers truth, beauty, and order as the highly structured and multi-layered text of Gen 1-4, which contains the creation account and its immediate aftermaths.

Starting from the most profound overall declaration, then thematically developing that declaration, the Creation Text (the first four chapters of Genesis) displays profound density of meaning, with the most compact statements at the beginning. The first verse is the keynote; the ideas it contains expand into the first chapter in greater detail. Chapters 2 to 4 add yet more detail, each word and phrase laden with meaning and far-reaching foreshadowings. As dedicated Bible students know, the teachings of Genesis form the backbone of the entire Bible. Echoes of Genesis redound even to the conclusion of the New Testament.

Gen 1:1, the first half of the two-verse Prologue, has the densest meaning of any verse in the Bible, as it covers the most territory in the fewest words. To fully appreciate the riches of this magnificent verse, this study will explore it from several perspectives:

- **Scope:** Gen 1:1 includes the entire realm of heaven and earth. What's left?
- **Theology:** it's the most profound statement about God ever written or that can be written.
- **Impact:** our overfamiliarity with Genesis dulls our awareness to its monumental impact.
- **Literary Structure:** it simultaneously introduces the creation account, the book of Genesis, and the Bible as a whole.
- **Uniqueness:** no ancient writing can compare with the orderly, elegant structure of the creation record.
- **Vision:** it reaches all the way back to the inception of the universe to establish an historical and "scientific" account.

Let's look at what each aspect brings to our understanding.

## Scope

The most obvious feature of 1:1 is its universal scope. Encompassing heaven and earth, verse 1 includes the entire universe as the initial creation of God. We can read this verse three ways, not necessarily mutually exclusive, and each offers a very broad scope. The first reading that comes to mind is a picture of all the vast heavens, with Earth, our home, being singled out for particular attention. A second possibility is that the phrase "heaven and earth" is a figure of speech meaning "everything there is," such as when you say you searched "high and low" to indicate "everywhere." If this is an idiom for "the entire universe," it describes the vast panorama of God's creative enterprise.

A third possible reading would take us even further. The phrase "heaven and earth" could encompass even more than the physical universe! How could that be? What is there beyond the universe? The key word here is "physical," for the word "heavens" can carry a meaning beyond the material universe; it can also express God's creation of the spiritual realm. The word for "earth" in the first verse denotes not only our planet specifically, but also the material realm in general. Consider the passage in Eph 1, where "heaven" refers to spiritual matters concerning the Divine presence and "earth" refers to humanity. God's purpose is to unite these two through Jesus his Son:

*"For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:9-10).*

This unity depends, in part, on our development of the spiritual values cited in Eph 4-5. These come from God, for from God flow all things, physical and spiritual, material and immaterial.

I don't know for sure if the primary intent of "heaven" in verse 1 is to include the intangible realm of such virtues as love, grace, mercy, virtue, and compassion, but it does accommodate this idea, and succeeding studies will use this perspective. This concept of heaven, combined with the entirety of the physical universe, embodied in the word "earth," would embrace the complete expanse of all creation.

## Theology

What can we know about God using only Gen 1:1? The verse has no description or information about God, but it does tell what God did. From that we can at least attribute "Creator" status to God. However, this sentence employs with maximum effect the technique of implication. In this way, it can tell us much about God without a direct word. By stating that in the beginning (that is, when the universe began, and here we define universe as the sum of all time, matter, energy, and space) God created, it implies that God exists/existed outside the realm of that universe. It does this incidentally and almost offhandedly. God was already present at the moment of the beginning.

Given that the beginning included the entire universe that came into existence at God's volition, what does this tell us about God? The Prologue gives no explanation of God other than by implication: God existed already at the beginning and is the cause of the entire universe. No amount of words describing God could propound this fact more eloquently than to propose God as already existent at, and the cause of, the beginning.

What could one say about the essential nature of Deity that "*in the beginning God*" doesn't already imply? This is a statement of infinite sublimity, condensation of thought, and moral and metaphysical power. In the fewest possible words, and therefore with the densest of meaning, the Bible introduces one eternal and omnipotent creator God. It does this without any direct description, by placing God outside the realm of our existence. Outside, in the sense of beyond, before, above, and around; encompassing and bringing into being the universe as we can barely comprehend it. Before the creative process starts, even before the statement describing the situation in which God began creation, God already existed. No more can be said on the matter.

Untold millions of words have issued forth from the mouths and pens of theologians and philosophers, but none of them will ever say nearly as much as does the Bible in one sentence that simply presupposes God has the attributes of creativity *ex nihilo*, omnipotence, and eternity. As we in the twenty-first century sense our minuscule presence in an ever-expanding knowledge of our universe, we should have all the more awe and respect for the Deity who brought it all into being by his will alone.

## Impact

The brief statement of the creation of the universe, featuring a creator God who stands outside the constraints of that universe, makes an impressive and comprehensive opening. Imagine a first-time reader picking up a book, looking at the first page, and reading no less than a declaration of the creation of the universe! What

kind of book is this going to be? Gen 1:1 is almost proverbial in its familiarity, so you may not appreciate its impact when you read it. Do not let familiarity dull your sense of the magnificent. It is not only a colossal declaration; it is also the very first sentence, with a massive impression upon the aware reader.

Yet no other statement or sentence could come first, at least not in a book that (to use human terms) audaciously and ambitiously sets out to teach us everything we need to know about God and life! Gen 1:1 has no peer for an opening sentence. Only overfamiliarity dulls our sense to its power and impact.

## **Literary Structure**

As a first verse, Gen 1:1 not only grabs our attention, but also introduces the text that follows. This verse fulfills four literary functions:

1. It sets the schematic stage for the shift of focus in verse 2.
2. It introduces the creation account of Genesis 1 and 2. It gives the broad picture of the creation of the universe after which the first two chapters specify the details.
3. It introduces the entire book of Genesis, which ends with the embryonic nation of Israel. The God of creation works out his purpose through Israel.
4. Ultimately, Gen 1:1 introduces the entire Bible. It is a synopsis of the entire plan and purpose of God (to unite things in heaven and earth, Eph 1:10), including events as far distant in time as those depicted at the end of the Revelation. The last chapters of Scripture are still within the context (and explicit language) of the heaven and earth declaration of the Bible's first verse.

The Prologue (verses 1 and 2) extends its overview from 1:1, first densely and strongly through chapter one, then it tapers to a guiding line through Genesis and all of Scripture. This feature alone displays the unsurpassed magnificence of verse one. It is the Prologue of the Creation Week and the Prologue of Genesis and the Prologue of Scripture. Regardless of where we are in the Bible, we are always in the shadow of the Prologue and the purview of the one creator God.

## **Uniqueness**

Despite this profound declaration, many critics have placed the Bible on the same order as other Near-Eastern Creation epics. Nothing in mythology comes even close to the precision, theological sophistication, literary sublimity, and exquisite structure of early Genesis. Those who study such matters know that no other ancient writing approaches the expression of thought evinced in Gen 1:1.

Read this assessment from one scholar who concedes that the Bible's creation account far exceeds primitive mythologies:

These foreign (Phoenician, Egyptian, Babylonian) creation myths recount not only the origins of the visible world, but, at the same time, of the Gods. Genesis 1, however, distinguishes itself radically from these all since there is no such theogony. This observation indicates the grandeur of Israel's religion.

The surrounding nations believe in gods who came into being at a most

ancient time. Israel's God, however, lives from eternity to eternity. Furthermore, all these creation accounts are mythological in nature . . . There is no greater contrast, then, than between the colorful, fantastic mythology of these peoples and the intellectually clear, prosaic supernaturalism of Gen 1.<sup>1</sup>

"Intellectually clear, prosaic supernaturalism" refers to the structured text and understated activity of God. We will focus as often on the structure as on the message, because Genesis is uniquely structured.

## **Vision**

Some defenses of early Genesis assert that the text is not intended to be a scientific account of how the world came to be. They dismiss the simplistic picture of God making stars and giraffes and say the narrative is figurative or symbolic.

To appreciate the issue of "vision," set aside your familiarity with the text and assume the role of a first-time reader. Also set aside concepts of the division of knowledge that treat "scientific" and "religious" as separate realms of inquiry requiring different modes of investigation. The question of origins leads us to the nexus of science, philosophy, and theology. The first verse of the Bible clearly implies that moral and theological matters depend ultimately upon the question of origins. As the French scholar Henri Blocher observed:

In the last analysis one cannot make an absolute separation between physics and metaphysics, and religion has to do with everything, precisely because all realms are created by God and continue to depend on him. To oppose 'doctrine' and (factual) 'history' is to forget that biblical doctrine is first of all history. Faith rests on facts, objectively asserted.<sup>2</sup>

The Bible doesn't recognize the assumptions most modern readers bring to it. The resurrection of Jesus is the most pertinent example of the principle expressed in the quotation above. The resurrection is a matter of faith and theology only because it is first a matter of history and biology. Likewise, the idea of a creator God is a religious matter only because it was first a matter of physics.

A fair reading of Genesis requires this expansive vision. The fullness of God's message involves matters that we, in this age, consider matters of "science," those that deal with the material, observable world. We may not know the details, but we do know that the Bible considers the origin of the universe a theological issue. By including a precisely formed creation account, the expansive vision of biblical narrative intends to relate the physical world and its Creator to issues of faith. That is why we want to ask not only questions about the creation account, but why it's even in the Bible.

## **A Concluding Thought**

Gen 1:1 stands without equal to any words ever written. I can say this confidently, having read only a small fraction of the great writings of the world, because it cannot, in principle, be exceeded. This verse, encompassing all heaven and earth in its grand sweep, takes us to a realm even beyond our reckoning of time and space.

Genesis 1:1 goes to the absolute limit of anything the human mind can conjure, and places God beyond that — all in a mere handful of words. No other thought could possibly start the Bible. It is the sentence of sentences in the Book of Books.

David Levin (Baltimore, MD)

**Notes:**

1. Hermann Gunkel, Genesis (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), p. 126.
2. Henri Blocher, In the Beginning: the opening chapters of Genesis (trans. D.G. Preston; Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1984), p. 24.

## **First Principles**

### **The Atonement in Practice (2) Adam and Eve**

No exposition of the Atonement can be complete without looking at the story of Adam and Eve. Many Bible students have delved deeply into this chapter, and some have extrapolated from it certain ideas which go beyond what we read in the text. Perhaps one difficulty we have with the story is that it is so other-worldly, speaking of things beyond are experience like the talking serpent, the idyllic setting of the garden of Eden, and life before sin and death had conquered mankind. But what are the real practical lessons from Gen 3 and the fall of man? Well consider what Paul says about it in the book of Romans:

*“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom 5:12).*

That verse and its context is at the centre of many controversies, like the doctrine of Original Sin which says that we are tainted with Adam's sin which needs to be atoned for as well as our own personal transgressions. It's hard to get your mind around such a concept, especially against the backdrop of the rest of Scripture which says things like *“the soul that sins, it shall die” (Ezek 18:4)* teaching we are responsible for our own sins and our sins alone. It also speaks against the doctrine of Substitution which says that Christ died instead of us. So what does Rom 5:12 mean in its simplicity? Read it carefully. It says death passed upon all men *“for that all have sinned”*. In other words we don't die because Adam sinned. We die because we're just like Adam and we sin too, and that's true for the entire human race (which Paul proves in Rom 3). The only man who broke this rule was the Lord Jesus Christ and that's why Rom 5 contrasts Adam with Christ. Suffice it to say Paul tells us in Rom 5 that Adam is the *typical man*. Adam is just like us, and by extension so is his wife Eve, and we're just like them. This means when we're reading Gen 3 we're reading the story of our own lives. We're reading about our own experiences. We're reading about the process of sin and death we're all a part of and for that reason Gen 3, far from being something outside our experience, is eminently practical.

In last month's article we had a look at the fundamental concept that the righteous shall live by faith. Well the story of Adam of Eve is the antithesis of that — how lack



of faith brings death. Instead of putting their faith in God they trusted a serpent. When it comes down to it, that's what Gen 3 is all about: do we trust God or do we trust the serpent?

Whatever we think of the serpent the most important thing to understand is what he represents for you and me. And the apostle Paul provides two Bible echoes where there are obvious links to the serpent of Genesis:

*"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen" (Rom 16:17-20).*

Here Paul is talking about false teachers and he uses the imagery of the serpent throughout. Paul makes a firm connection with the serpent by alluding to Gen 3:15 when he talks about Satan being bruised under their feet. He also says they serve their own belly, which reminds us of the serpent being cursed to slither along on his belly (Gen 3:14). But what does that mean? How do we serve our own belly? By listening to our instincts instead of listening to God. If you think about it you obey your belly quite often and in fact the phrase "gut instinct" recognizes this fact.

Also Paul says these false teachers use good words and fair speeches to deceive the hearts of the simple, or naive. That's exactly what the serpent did, enticing Eve with his half-lie about the tree. This isn't the only place where Paul uses language of the serpent to describe false teachers:

*"For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil 3:18-19).*

Again we have reference to the belly and the final destruction of the serpent, which ultimately is connected with a certain mindset — minding earthly things. That's where the serpent's mind was one hundred percent of the time because he was just an animal and animals can't raise their thinking above the earthly level. A false teacher is someone who follows in the footsteps of the serpent and speaks out of the thoughts of their earthly hearts instead of the spiritual words of God.

But that's not to say serpent thinking is an obvious thing to spot and counter in our own lives. We can be our own false teachers when we rely on what the flesh is telling us (our gut instinct) instead of what the Word of God says, and it's subtle. In fact we know that the serpent is described as more subtle than the other animals God created. But that word is actually a Hebrew word most commonly translated *prudent* and is more often than not a positive attribute, especially in the book of Proverbs. The question is, though, where does our prudence or wisdom come from? Let's see what Proverbs says:

*“The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit” (Prov 14:8).*

That word translated “prudent” is the same as the word used to describe the serpent as “subtil”. In a sense the serpent was no fool. He analyzed the situation and gave his summation of God’s commandment, concluding that it was wrong. You don’t die from eating fruit, you see, and since it was named by God *“the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”* then it was worth eating its fruit because you would grow in wisdom. Without faith in God’s commandment that seems reasonable, and that’s how the flesh thinks. We make what can often seem like very prudent decisions but without them being driven by God’s word they are going to be wrong, as far as eternal life is concerned. And quite often what God says is so against our natural fleshly desires that it sounds wrong. However faith says God is right and the just shall live by faith, and that’s what Adam and Eve lacked. Look at what the Proverbs go on to say just a few verses later:

*“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov 14:12).*

There are a lot of things that seem right, especially when we go with our gut instincts. And very often in this world gut instincts actually work. Research has shown, for instance, that going with your gut when choosing what stocks to invest in can often be more successful than trying to analyze all your options. But as far as eternal life is concerned things are different. We can’t go with our gut, we can’t be ruled over by our belly; we have to trust in God even when the other way *seems* so right. Eating the fruit seemed right to Eve: it looked good, it tasted good and it promised wisdom. But it was wrong and it led to death. This world is full of serpent teaching, not just in a religious context but in so much of the advice this world offers. It’s all based on earthly thinking and instead the motto of our lives should be *“let God be true, and ever man a liar” (Rom 3:4).*

After Adam and Eve sinned we’re told *“the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked” (Gen 3:7).* What does that mean? We can’t take it literally unless we suppose they were blind before they sinned. It’s actually an experience we all go through when we taste something pleasurable for the first time. For instance when you let a baby taste chocolate for the first time you see their eyes widen as they contrast it with the bland taste of baby cereal. Their eyes have been opened and there is no going back. It’s the same with sin. Once we have tasted the pleasure of sin (or anything pleasurable like eating) the *nucleus accumbens* (a part of our brain) releases a chemical called dopamine and our memory system associates the activity we are doing with this feeling of pleasure. And so Adam and Eve, due to their experience, gained a propensity to sin and we follow suit. We are hardwired to sin because survival is based on gaining pleasure from advantageous behaviour. That’s all well and good as far as this world is concerned but once again it’s minding earthly things. Faith doesn’t release dopamine from the *nucleus accumbens* but it does promise eternal life.

Adam and Eve, ashamed of themselves, tried to cover up their sin with fig leaves (Gen 3:7) but then came their education. God doesn’t want us to have a fig-leaf

religion. He wants us to have a religion based on sacrifice, and so he clothed the pair with animal skins. What is the difference between these two pictures? Why animal skins instead of fig leaves? Well when we do something wrong we have the natural desire to want to cover the nakedness we feel. Often this comes in the form of self-justification and that's what a fig-leaf religion is, a religion based on trying to cover our sins with man-made solutions. We might try to justify ourselves by saying what we did wasn't wrong, or we might try to balance things up by doing what we think are good works to make up for it.

But that's not God's way. God's way is sacrifice and this was what he was teaching Adam and Eve when he made them coats of skins. He was teaching them, and us, that in order to be right with him we have to die. This was what the sacrifices under the Law of Moses taught and it is what the death of Christ should mean to us too. What it means on a practical level, as we see throughout Scripture, is that we need to live by faith if we want to be righteous. Living by faith is trusting God and that means sacrifice. It means saying "no" to the serpent even though it seems right. It means denying ourselves the pleasures of sin despite the intense desire we have for the dopamine effect. And it means putting the survival of others ahead of our own — or in other words loving our brothers and sisters and giving up our lives in service to them. These things are all against our nature and require us to sacrifice the things we want to do.

Faith is the battle between the *nucleus accumbens* we're born with and the spiritual pleasure of doing God's will which is not based on earthly thinking. Gen 3:15 describes that battle; the battle between those who desire to do God's will but are confronted by the serpent, whether it be our own gut instincts or the world around us. Both constantly draws us away from God's truth with ideas that seem right but lead to death. This is the doctrine of the atonement, demonstrated finally upon the cross where Jesus showed his supreme trust in the living God and utterly denied the natural thinking of the flesh.

*Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Rd, ON)*

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*"Consider David's sons. Amnon thought it right to rape his sister: he died for it (2Sam 13:1-39). Absalom thought it right to steal his father's kingdom: he died for it (2Sam 15:1-6; 18:1-18). Adonijah thought it right to use Solomon's mother to beg for Abishag: he died for it (1Kgs 2:12-25)" (Jonathan Crosby, Let God Be True).*

*"Reject the flesh as a way of life. It isn't. It is a way of death. Reject it over the whole spectrum of your thinking and activity. It is cheating, deceptive and misleading. It has nothing to offer by way of satisfaction and happiness, in spite of all its false promises and glittering attraction. It's the world's biggest fake and fraud" (G.V. Growcott).*

**Sunday school resources coming soon on the Tidings website:  
<http://www.tidings.org/>. Can you help preview Sunday school materials  
before they are posted on the web? Please contact Bro. Jim Harper at  
[sundayschool@tidings.org](mailto:sundayschool@tidings.org).**

# **The Joy of Sunday School**

## **The Learning Disabled Child in Sunday School**

It has been estimated that one in ten children has a learning disability. In Sunday school, therefore, teachers may also be faced with the unpredictable and delicate challenge of teaching learning disabled children. The teaching methods used with such children must be highly personalized, compatible with the child's strengths and accommodate their areas of weakness. The following suggestions may be useful in working with these children.

- 1) Learning disabled children learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process, such as acting out a story or constructing a model of the tabernacle. Most of these children will remember things they touch and hear and see and smell. They need to have information presented in a variety of ways.
- 2) Don't assume that the child has understood your instructions. A learning disabled child finds complex instructions confusing and difficult to remember, so it is necessary to break down what you want the child to do into very clear and precise steps.
- 3) If you know what readings you plan to use during the lesson, contact the child during the week so that they can practice the verses assigned to them to read.
- 4) During the lesson have the child sit by you or a competent reader. When reading aloud, teach them to point to an unknown word so they can quickly be told what it is without disrupting the flow of the reading.
- 5) Allow the child to use their finger or a marker as they read to help them keep their place on the page.
- 6) Reduce the amount of written work that the child is expected to produce. If a written assignment is part of their homework, enlist the parents' help by having the child dictate their answers to them.
- 7) If possible, evaluate the child's progress by testing them orally.
- 8) Progress must be made tangible with gold stars, stickers, or charts noting completed assignments or appropriate behavior.
- 9) Learning disabled children can be disruptive, so plan your seating carefully.
- 10) Sensitize the other students to the learning disabled child through specific Bible lessons: e.g., how did the blind man at the pool of Siloam feel? Or use the lesson of 1Cor 12 on the various parts of the body.

Many learning disabled children experience some sort of social and/or emotional problems because of their handicaps. You can help the learning disabled child by encouraging him to participate in activities in which he can excel — to the honor of God and his own growth as a person.

Let the child know that you love them. Look for things to praise, and find ways to make them realize that they are accepted and worthwhile despite their difficulties.

*Unsigned contribution: submitted by Jim Harper (Meriden, CT)*

## Youth Speaks

### The daughters of Zelophehad (2) The Inheritance

The daughters of Zelophehad had presented their plea to Moses. In what they said to him about Korah's rebellion and about their father's death they showed the depth of their spiritual insight. This same insight will shine forth as we now explore the inheritance and the significance of a family's name in Israel. The daughters understood the meaning that God had given to each of these things. Rather than just being a piece of property, the inheritance was much more; rather than just being a title, a family's name was much more. In this article we will look first at the inheritance, and second at the family name.

When looking at the characteristics of the inheritance, it becomes clear that the inheritance pointed forward towards something greater to come: it was the end result of a teamwork between the children of Israel and Yahweh their God. He would strengthen them to drive the nations out of their land:

*"To drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day" (Deut 4:38).*

It was not to have any of the old inhabitants still dwelling in it — it was to be cleansed:

*"But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth" (Deut 20:16).*

Along the same lines as the thought above, it could not be defiled. It must be pure:

*"His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) **that thy land be not defiled**, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance" (Deut 21:23).*

It was connected to the time of rest:

*"For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you" (Deut 12:9).*

It was only given to the faithful:

*"Now therefore in the sight of all Israel the congregation of the LORD, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the LORD your God: that ye may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance for your children after you for ever" (1Chron 28:8).*

*"When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee; but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them: but he that putteth his trust in me*

*shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain” (Isa 57:13).*

Conversely, just as the inheritance was given to those who were righteous, it could also be lost by those who were unrighteous or unfaithful. This is the principle that the prophet Ezekiel sought to teach the people:

*“Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance. Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land?” (Ezek 33:24-25).*

The people looked at Abraham and said, “he was only one man and he was given the land. We are many people, surely the land is ours!” Yet because of their wickedness and idolatry, God said that they would not inherit it. The same principle comes out when we think about the wandering in the wilderness after the people left Egypt. God had promised them an inheritance, yet they were unfaithful and didn’t truly believe that God would conquer the giants in the land. So God refused to give it to them, but instead the land would be given to their children. An inheritance depended on a life based on faith and righteousness.

When we bring all of these things together, we can see that the inheritance had a powerful significance behind it. Here are the characteristics again:

- It was the end result of a faithful teamwork between the people and Yahweh their God
- It was pure, with all of the heathen nations driven from it, and it was not to be defiled
- It was connected to the time of rest
- It was given strictly to those who were faithful
- It was withheld from the unrighteous

These characteristics come together and have strong undertones of the Kingdom — a time when the land will not be defiled by the immorality of its inhabitants, when the gift will be given to the believers for their faithful teamwork with their Father (Phil 2:12-13). It will be a time of rest.

This is why we see other verses which mention an inheritance, and at the same time, can only be applicable to the Kingdom of God. Let’s just survey a few of those:

*“What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. His soul shall dwell at ease; and **his seed shall inherit the earth**” (Psa 25:12-13).*

The seed of the righteous would have the entire earth as their inheritance! This is surely Kingdom-type language. Again, just a few psalms later, we see that this same theme shows up repeatedly:

*“For evildoers shall be cut off; but those that wait upon the LORD, **they shall inherit the earth**” (Psa 37:9).*

*“But **the meek shall inherit the earth**; and shall delight themselves in the*

*abundance of peace” (Psa 37:11).*

*“For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off” (Psa 37:22).*

Yet in addition to connecting the inheritance with the Kingdom in this respect, Psa 37 also brings out another connection between the two:

*“The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever” (Psa 37:18).*

The inheritance of the righteous will truly be in the Kingdom of God, when the Lord Jesus reigns from Jerusalem. We will remember that this is the type of inheritance that was promised to Abraham and his seed. Yahweh promised him the land from the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt (Gen 15:18) as his inheritance — yet he never received it! Only after the Lord Jesus returns will Abraham receive his inheritance.

In ancient Israel, the inheritance had a very powerful spiritual meaning. It was beautifully connected to the Kingdom. Just like the Kingdom would be filled with God’s glory, so this inheritance was to be undefiled and a place where His name would be lifted up — thus, if this was not happening, then the family would lose the land. It was a place for God to be honored. The inheritance would show a family’s connection to the Father in heaven, and show their desire to lift up His name.

These sisters had brilliant spiritual perception in this matter of the inheritance. Much of this wisdom was probably passed down by one of their role models, their ancestor Joseph. This cleaving to the inheritance was a trait powerfully demonstrated by him and passed on to his descendants.

### **Joseph’s Influence**

*“And Joseph saw Ephraim’s children of the third generation: the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph’s knees” (Gen 50:23).*

Look at the impact that Joseph had on his progeny. We can perhaps picture the scene of great grandpa with all of the little children sitting around, speaking to the seed of Israel about the miraculous way that Yahweh had brought them to Egypt and had saved them. Imagine him telling them his story, and about the way that he was revealed to their great uncles. Think of the impression that it would have on them when he spoke to them about the Promised Land, and assured them that one day, they would be back in that land. Then, picture how his faith would have been burned into their minds as the frail, old Joseph took an oath of them that they would not forget to bring back his bones to the land when Yahweh brought them out of Egypt.

*“And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence” (Gen 50:24-25).*

With this charge, surely Joseph would have driven into his descendant's minds that the land and their inheritance were of great importance. His one dying wish was to have his bones brought back to the land which was to be inherited by the seed of Israel. He knew that God would bring them back, he knew that Israel was the Promised Land, and as he raised up his great grandchildren, he must have urged them to remember that. This love for the inheritance, and the greater inheritance that would eventually be given at the resurrection, was almost surely passed down through the generations, as Gilead heard it directly from his great-grandfather Joseph and passed it on to Hephher, and Hephher passed it to Zelophehad, and Zelophehad told his daughters.

So it was that the daughters of Zelophehad had a strong understanding of the spiritual meaning of the inheritance. It wasn't just a plot of land to them, but it was their family's connection to God. Yet not only did these sisters seem to understand the meaning of the inheritance, but also seemed to understand the significance of a name in Israel, and how that name was connected to the land given by God. They specifically said that their father's name would be "*done away from among his family*" if he did not receive this inheritance.

### The Name

Zelophehad's young daughters were exactly right in what they said. The inheritance also had strong connections with the name of the one who possessed it — if the inheritance was lost, their name would too be lost in the history of Israel. The name of a family was carried on through their inheritance; the plot of land that they received would be known as that family's space, their territory. This is shown in the story of Ruth and Boaz. When Boaz performed the part of the kinsman-redeemer to Ruth, one of his jobs was to keep the name of her dead former husband alive through his inheritance.

*"Moreover Ruth the Moabite, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, **to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance**, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day" (Ruth 4:10).*

Boaz was to raise up the name of the dead on his inheritance. He would use Mahlon's old inheritance to keep his family name alive. Thus, if a family lost their inheritance, not only would they lose their gift from God, and their possession which symbolized their connection to Him, their name would also disappear from Israel.

It was extremely important that the family name was kept alive, because having a good name in Israel symbolized your favor with God. Over and over Scripture tells us that the name of the wicked are blotted out, and that they disappear:

*"Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast **put out their name for ever and ever**" (Psa 9:5).*

*"The memory of the just is blessed: but **the name of the wicked shall rot**" (Prov 10:7).*



If a family name was lost from under heaven, then it would be assumed that this happened because the family had fallen out of favor with God. The family had become wicked, and so God destroyed the name. The daughters' point was that their father wasn't part of a rebellious group like Korah's henchmen, he just died in his own sin. He died a natural death. Therefore, why should his name be blotted out?

Thus they presented their plea to Moses, eagerly awaiting God's response. What would be decided? What would be the fate of their father's name? Would God in His mercy allow them to inherit the land?

In our next article, we will see God's response.

Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

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## ***Come, Thou Fount of Ev'ry Blessing***

*Come, Thou Fount of ev'ry blessing,  
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;  
Streams of mercy never ceasing,  
Call for songs of loudest praise.*

*Teach me some melodious sonnet,  
Sung by flaming tongues above;  
Praise the mount — I'm fixed upon it —  
Mount of Thy redeeming love.*

*Here I raise my Ebenezer;  
Hither by Thy help I'm come;  
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure,  
Safely to arrive at home.*

*Jesus sought me when a stranger,  
Wand'ring from the fold of God;  
He, to rescue me from danger,  
Interposed his precious blood.*

*O to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,  
Bind my wand'ring heart to Thee.*

Robert Robinson

*"On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity" (Zech 13:1).*

*"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations" (Rev 22:1,2).*

# Reflections

## Marriage Proverbs

### (1) Guidelines for a Happy Relationship

*“He who finds a wife finds a good thing, And obtains favor from the LORD”  
((Prov. 18:22 NKJV)*

**Prologue:**

Marriage is a God given institution established from the very beginning when “... the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”[ESV] And “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:18, 24).<sup>1</sup> In ages past marriage was considered to important and serious an affair to be left to the actual participants; instead the parents mutually arranged it. In some regions of the world that may still be the case, but for all intents and purposes, in so-called advanced cultures that practice faded out in the 20th century. I doubt that there can be many in our Christadelphian community here in North America whose marriages were arranged in the fashion that Abraham did for his son Isaac!<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that individual men and women, almost without exception, make their own free choices of whom to marry has not meant that we are necessarily wiser or happier than generations past in terms of our relationships. In fact data on the state of marriage in the United States is downright painful to contemplate and shamefully, the decay of the sanctity of marriage has also increasingly afflicted our own community.

The facts related to the decline in committed lasting unions are readily available, because the numbers of marriages and divorces is a matter of public record. Beyond the obvious numbers one can also get a picture of the details with respect to how perhaps maturity, culture and other factors might affect the chances for success or failure in a marriage. According to recent federal government statistics in 2009 there were 6.8 marriages and 3.4 divorces per 1000 people in our population.<sup>3</sup> This corresponds to approximately a 50% divorce rate, which is relatively consistent with data reported in a number of other sources.<sup>4</sup> What is quite discouraging, and at the same time painfully revealing, is that second and third marriages fail at even a greater rate than first marriages.

**Divorce statistics in America for marriage<sup>5</sup>**

Marriage	Divorce rate
First Marriage	45 to 50% end in divorce
Second Marriage	60 to 67% end in divorce
Third Marriage	70 to 73% end in divorce

Obviously, some people may learn from their earlier mistake(s), but most don't. Also these numbers don't say anything about the growing trend to co-habitat and not bother to get married at all. The percentage of the population that was married in 1970 was 72% and that has dropped to 59% by the 21st century. There is also a growing trend for couples to live and sleep together prior to marriage, claiming that they are, in effect, "trying before buying" as one young student mentioned to me at work. The presumed idea is that apparently people believe that this try out period leads to a more stable marriage relationship in the long run. Not unexpectedly, this doesn't seem to be the case. In fact, approximately 60% of the couples who co-habitat prior to marriage end up divorced. As one family source explains: "These couples are less likely to stay married, probably mostly due to the fact that they are less conservative about marriage and divorce in the first place."<sup>6</sup>

The United States is not that unique among advanced industrial nations. In the United Kingdom, the divorce rate for the year 2000 for first marriages was nearly identical to the United States, approximately 51%.<sup>7</sup> One can trace the change in divorce rate in the UK from 1950, where it was only 8% and didn't change significantly over the next 20 years until 1980 when it jumped to 38%. One can only wonder if this pattern is echoed in the decline in religion in western societies, in general, as one important factor in determining a couples' commitment to marriage. Certainly, among close-knit religious communities, with strong family ties, such as the Amish, divorce is extremely rare.<sup>8</sup>

The divorce rates for Canada are nominally lower, but appear to be climbing into the same range as the USA and UK since the liberalization of the divorce laws in 1985. To quote one source for Canada: "The all-time 'low' (for the divorce rate) was in 1987, when it was expected that 50.6% of all marriages in Canada would end before the 30th wedding anniversary."<sup>9</sup>

The fact is that almost universally the divorce rate tends to peak from around the seventh to eighth years of a marriage through the tenth and eleventh years and not immediately in the first year or two. Many experts believe this is a result not of a husband and wife waking up one day and realizing they made a mistake, but rather it is the product of pent up frustrations that stayed unresolved until they eventually lead to a rupture in the relationship. Hence, in many cases proactive counseling and the realization by the married couple that they need to address issues and solve them might be beneficial and could save many a relationship.

The nature of the family has also changed dramatically over the past 30 plus years and has put new strains upon marriage that didn't exist in *grandma and grandpa's time*, to coin a phrase! At one time the father was the primary wage earner in the family and mothers stayed home and did the housekeeping while caring for the children. This is no longer the picture of the American family. Today, most recent figures show that approximately 54% of the households in the United States have both partners working and in roughly 7% of the cases the woman is the sole breadwinner. The latch key family today is not an anomaly, but more or less common phenomena in about half the households in America — I myself grew up in such a household with Mom working on and off to make ends meet.

There is a tendency sometimes among Christadelphians to put our heads, as it were, in the sand and act like this has nothing to do with us. After all we say, *this is the world, that is not the way it is in God's household*. Unfortunately, in the almost 54 years since I was baptized, I have recently witnessed more and more breakdowns in marriages in our own community. We may not yet mirror the statistics of the rest of America, but we are certainly heading in that direction. Too often we are reactive only after the fact when the breakdown has entered a public state of affairs and remedial action is by then far too late. Many couples along the way don't recognize the signposts that should warn them of trouble ahead, and take action themselves to move their relationship to a better place.

What will follow, in succeeding essays, will not be a comprehensive analysis that can cover every circumstance, because that would require a series of volumes. But instead it is my intention to give some scriptural guidelines that may help some in their own personal situations and make others who may be counselors aware of tools they might apply to restore relationships. **None of these essays are intended to be a substitute for good professional Christian counseling where circumstances dictate.**

Having said all this it is important to realize, once again, that marriage is a God given institution and should be taken very seriously. When Mary and I were married the presiding Brother included in our vows — *for better or worse, till death do us part* and we never gave it a second thought to have any reservations concerning those words. So lightly do some couples take their vows today that I understand from a jeweler that people rarely have their wedding bands engraved these days — just in case they eventually become community property! The Scriptures tell us that “*Marriage is honorable among all*” (Heb. 13:4). It is with this in mind that, Lord willing, in succeeding articles we will look at some Scriptural guidelines for a happy marriage.

*Next: Guideline Number 1: Choose wisely.*

*John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)*

Notes:

1. This is not to say that everyone must be married recall the words of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 19:12) and of the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 7:1), but this is a subject to be treated in a later essay.
2. Genesis 24:4
3. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/divorce.htm>
4. <http://www.divorcestatistics.org/>, and many similar, which you can find on the web.
5. Jennifer Baker, Forest Institute of Professional Psychology, Springfield, Missouri.
6. <http://www.meninmarriage.com/article05.htm>
7. [www.statistics.gov.uk/](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/)
8. It is claimed that the divorce rate among the Amish is virtually nil. One website claims it is about 0.5%; see <http://www.amish-heartland.com/amish/article/193348> and also [http://www.lydiaofpurple.com/divorce\\_stats.htm](http://www.lydiaofpurple.com/divorce_stats.htm).
9. <http://www.ottawadivorce.com/statistics.htm>; Note here in the context of the article cited the word ‘low’ referred not to the divorce rate (which was indeed high) but to the emotional state of the author of the statistical study.

## Belonging to the One Body

***“...Each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function” (Rom 12:4).***

This verse and the next are a repetition of 1Cor 12:12-27 in miniature. To offset the danger of individualistic thinking with its resulting danger of pride, Paul refers to the human body. Two truths are set forth in this verse:

- 1) the unity of the body; and
- 2) the diversity of its members, with corresponding diversity in function.

We can, individually, be very different from one another, yet still be bound in unity by a common faith and hope.

*“So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each members belongs to all the others” (Rom 12:5, NIV).*

Paul now offers a third truth to go with the two in the previous verse: (1) The body of Christ is a unity, despite (2) the diverse nature of its members. And then he adds:

- 3) Diversity must never mean independence; every member ***belongs*** to all the other members, and depends on them all.

This verse is the positive side of the negative statement in Paul’s corresponding analogy for the Corinthians believers:

*“If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, **I do not belong** to the body,’ it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, **I do not belong** to the body,’ it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body” (1Cor 12:15,16).*

Furthermore, each member should profit from what the other members contribute to the whole. Reflection on these truths reduces preoccupation with one’s own gifts, and with one’s own ‘special’ place in the brotherhood, while at the same time it makes room for appreciation of other people and the gifts they exercise.

Harry Tennant writes: “A man’s reaction to the needs of the body to which he has supposedly given allegiance is often a measure of the true character of the man himself. Self-seeking, opportunism and disregard for the lasting well-being of the corporate fellowship can cause untold unhappiness both to the individual and to the higher cause of the association and community spirit by which his fellows live. This is especially true of our relationship as individuals to the ecclesia and community to which we belong. Our attitude to the body is our attitude to Christ. The ecclesia *is* his body. If we are superior to it, we lack humility; if we are divisive within it, we deny the atonement by which we were reconciled and made one” (*The Man David*, 182).

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

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*“Most of us can read the writing on the wall; we just assume it’s addressed to someone else” (Ivern Ball)*

## Letters

Dear Editor:

Re: October editorial (Presumption — dealing with the Thieves on the Cross):

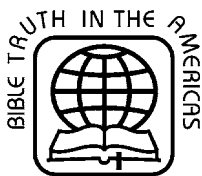
The accounts of Matt 27 and Mark 15 are in perfect harmony concerning the story of the thieves crucified with Christ. Luke 23:32 says that Christ was crucified with two *“malefactors.”* This is significant because thieves can be malefactors, but a malefactor is not necessarily a thief. In the strongest sense of the word, a malefactor is simply, *an evil person*. Paraphrasing Luke; **Both evil-doers were crucified with him; one evil man on the right, the other evil man on the left.** The rest of the Luke agrees with Matthew and Mark.

All three gospels state that **everyone** at the crucifixion was mocking Jesus. One *evil man* crucified with him begins to mock him as well; at this point we must pay close attention to the words exchanged between Jesus and the *other evil man*, and recall that Luke purposely wanted us to understand that Christ was crucified with **two** evil men, one on either side. Moreover, Matthew and Mark agree that **both thieves** mocked him. At this point, the other *evil man* rebukes the first *evil man* and says, **“Don’t you know who this is? This man is a man of God. Don’t you fear God? He is hanging on this cross with us because he’s done nothing wrong.”** And then he says the same thing as everyone else, mocking the “supposed” King. **“Remember me in thy Kingdom.”** I submit that in view of the fact that **both malefactors** derided Christ it is logical to assume that these remarks were intended also in a mocking fashion!

One further observation regarding Christ’s response to the second thief, namely, **“Today** you’ll be with me in paradise”; we know that Jesus did not go to heaven that day. He went to the heart of the earth, for three days and three nights, yet he said to the *evil man* on the cross, **“Today.”** So we must now recognize that Christ could not have been referring to Heaven by the prior statements he had made. Paradise therefore must have been a reference to a place in the heart of the earth, for the heart of the earth is where Christ was going, “Today.” Thus, the standard Christian teaching on *heaven going* upon death, which is taken from the Luke dialog between Jesus and the malefactor, cannot in fact be supported after careful consideration of these passages.

*Your brother in Christ, Jim Day (Canterbury, Aus)*

*Other Christadelphian writers have inferred that the expression “Today” was the emphatic form of the Greek. Thus Christ wasn’t implying something would happen literally that day, but rather that he was “speaking” that day. Also note that Luke’s gospel was intended for Gentiles and Christ’s reply to the words “Remember me in thy Kingdom” were included to give hope that even in extreme circumstances forgiveness was possible when one was repentant. (Letter Editor)*



## Bible Mission News

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### Guatemalan Ecclesia — An Example of Perseverance!

Perseverance is a character trait that is required throughout our lifetime. It is one of the key factors that has helped maintain the lightstand in Guatemala City, Guatemala. Bro. Ross and Sis. Wendy Melles from New Zealand labored to establish an ecclesia in this city when they were there with their young family for approximate three years — 1995 to early 1998. Bro. Juan Palacios was the first member baptized on September 25, 1995. Then Bro. Douglas Vanegas (originally from El Salvador) and his wife (Marisol from Costa Rica) continued the efforts in Guatemala from late 1998 to early 2001, and then moved to Costa Rica. Over the years there have been 12 baptisms in Guatemala — for various reasons the Truth has not been well received in this country. Sadly, several members have fallen asleep in the Lord and several members do not attend at all now. Brethren Juan Palacios, Jorge Trinidad and Encarnación Gómez have remained faithful to their calling and have persevered!



Guatemala, Sunday, September 25th — left to right  
back row — Bro. Juan Palacios (first brother 1995), Victor Garcia,  
Carlos Pelen, Bro. Jorge Trinidad, Roberto Diaz  
front row — Victoria (Victor's daughter), Marina (Victor's wife),  
Saul (Victoria's son), Bro. Encarnacion Gomez.

During my visit with the ecclesia from September 23 to 27, we were received very hospitably by the members and friends, spending many hours together around the Word throughout the weekend. Jorge met me at the airport and accompanied me to the hotel, and the two of us enjoyed meals and readings together on several occasions. One of the highlights of the visit was to meet six contacts who have been regularly attending the ecclesia — four men and two women. One 30 year old man certainly had a story to tell! He had attended an evangelical church and was fully involved. However, he could never agree with the doctrines and felt he had no real tangible hope! He started searching the internet and soon came across [www.labiblia.com](http://www.labiblia.com)! He told us he had found real hope which made such a difference in his life. We have heard since our visit that he has requested preparation for baptism and we pray that in a future communication we can announce this happy event. We also spoke to two other members who regularly attended in the past and we're encouraged by a positive reception. It is our hope they will once again join the Body of Christ in Guatemala City.

*Don Luff*  
CBMA Representative

## Visiting El Salvador after 17 years

Although we have been privileged to visit ecclesias in other Latin American countries in recent years, for several reasons we had not been able to return to see our brethren in El Salvador since 1994. And although I went prepared to present a number of studies to the three ecclesias in San Salvador, Usulután and Sonsonate — I also received much encouragement through witnessing the spiritual health of the brotherhood in this country.

The brethren from the original ecclesia in the capital city of San Salvador have supported the establishment of two other ecclesias for many years. The CBMA just



**Sisters who prepared the hot noon meal. Sis. Carmen on left is a mother in Israel to this ecclesia. The old house on the lot is to the left and street in background.**

completed the purchase of a lot for the growing Usulután Ecclesia, on which the brethren are preparing to build their own hall, after renting for many years. During our stay we were able to visit Usulután and see the location of the lot and actually enjoyed a hot noon meal there on September 28th under trees on the very site of the future hall. After lunch, a Bible Class was held on the “Cities of Refuge” — about 25 in attendance — and



the ecclesia numbers nine members! The rest were regular visitors and some are preparing for baptism.



**Usulután Bible Class in older house on lot we are purchasing (due to thunder storm!) — dirt floor and old clay brick walls that has withstood many earthquakes. Fabulous group with more preparing for baptism.**

On September 29th, we were driven in the opposite direction from the capital, west to Sonsonate. This ecclesia rents a very adequate house, in a quiet neighbourhood about three blocks from the center of the city. The members are happy with their rental facility and although most work during the day, about ten members and youths were present in the afternoon to greet us and provide refreshments. Although our main objective was to see the rental location and no activity had been arranged, I could sense a degree of expectation for something, so I asked “Cantamos unos himnos?” (Shall we sing some hymns?) and the positive response was immediate. So we added a class on the “Role of the Saints in the Kingdom”, and enjoyed fellowship for the afternoon!



**Members of the Sonsonate Ecclesia at the Bible Class. Bro. Jaime Mate (green shirt) and his wife Sis. Karla drove from San Salvador to the Usulután Ecclesia almost every Sunday for years, and took time away from his furniture business to drive us to Sonsonate.**

The San Salvador Ecclesia planned activities for both the Saturday and Sunday (Oct. 1 and 2nd). The Sunday was a fraternal for all three ecclesias — 130 brothers, sisters, youths and friends were present. The hall was packed! The day's activities consisted of a Breaking of Bread, a hot meal and two studies. Two of the weekend's studies focused on "Marriage in the Truth" — this is a challenging task in today's society, in any country.



**The San Salvador Fraternal, a group of brothers and sisters. The oldest sister is Lilian Rubio. She was one of the first baptisms in 1975.**

In addition to these activities, a memory verse competition was held that lasted an hour! I was astounded and overcome by what I witnessed. In the children's section Eduardo Mate (11) recited about 35 verses and Krissia Lea Castillo (10) recited about 30 verses. Both with very little prompting — I was amazed! But the topper was two of the adults who recited large portions of Scripture. Jorge Augusto Garcia from Sonsonate recited 65 verses with very little trouble — this included the whole epistle of Philemon! Then Crisia Castillo (Jorge's sister) recited 76 verses from all over the Bible — she broke down crying reciting a good portion of Psalm 139 — I wondered what happened. Her husband, Rene, was presiding about four feet from her and had to hold on to her until she composed herself. She was finally able the turn to the audience and told us that it was one of her favorite Psalms — she finished a few more verses of the Psalm and went on to other passages. Krissia, Crisia and Jorge are all of the same family! I could hardly believe what I just witnessed. I was humbled by this and other indicators of the level of spirituality throughout



**Eduardo Mate and Krissia Lea Castillo in memory verse competition.**

the day. We arrived at the Hall for the 9:30 Breaking of Bread and left at about 4:30 — what a day! I tried to give my best for all ages present, but I felt that I received more in return. What an uplifting experience! The hospitality and fellowship was exceptional.

*Submitted by Don Luff  
CBMA Representative*

## Guyana — Joint Demerara CYC



While in Guyana in June for our annual visit we had the pleasure of attending the CYC in Georgetown. We were amazed to watch Sis. Dawne Semple, CYC leader, reciting 2 Timothy 2 while others eagerly followed in their Bibles to jump to her aid if she stumbled. This was followed by Sis. Elisa Howard (baptized from Sis. Dawne's Lively Stones youth group a few years ago) with Ephesians 1. As if that was not sufficient Sis. Atiya (Diana) Ndjelekulu then stood up and began reciting James 1. The goal these sisters have set for themselves is to memorize a chapter per week until the book is memorized. What a powerful example to the other CYCs

and to us! We struggle to have our children memorize a verse.

As I watched around the room at the engaged faces, waiting on each word, I felt great admiration for what they were modeling for the other youths. There were about 36 youths in attendance from all three Demerara ecclesias (Georgetown, Eccles, Mocha). CYC was then officially opened. Ted gave an engaging presentation on Noah's flood, supported by powerpoint images for over one hour. The youths rarely fidgeted but paid close attention to what he presented. After a brief question/comment period, they played Bible "swords" (a race to see who could look up a verse quickest and read it). They dismissed with all CYCs forming a circle and each one reciting a verse or two of their own choosing then they closed with prayer and dismissed. It was enjoyable to watch their enthusiasm and engagement.

Each year we look forward to the weeks we spend in Guyana. We come away physically exhausted but spiritually rejuvenated. If you are able to spend even six months working in the mission field there is great need in Guyana. Please contact us for more information ([tsleeper@astound.net](mailto:tsleeper@astound.net)) or attend the annual Bible school held Easter week.



*Submitted by Ted and  
Dolores Sleeper  
CBMA Link Couple*

## Introducing "Learn To Read The Bible Effectively" On ThisIsYourBible.com!

We are pleased to announce that the **Learn to Read the Bible Effectively** seminar has been added to the courses available to students on [www.thisisyourbible.com](http://www.thisisyourbible.com). This adds a second course for our students, which supplements the **Exploring the Bible** correspondence course.

We are excited about this new course. For some time now, we have been seeking a course that would encourage students to learn new skills and apply them to their own Bible study. We are convinced that asking students to evaluate and assess Scriptures for themselves is at the core of what [www.thisisyourbible.com](http://www.thisisyourbible.com) wishes to offer. As our search went on for a second course, it became apparent that the **Learn to Read the Bible Effectively** course, which has been successfully employed across North America for more than 20 years, provided such a learning platform.

The new course is designed as sixteen video lessons that are viewed on-line by students. They have control over which lesson they watch and the speed of which they complete the lessons. Each lesson provides a skill or an insight that will facilitate improved Bible study. At the completion of the lesson, the student is asked to apply the skills from that lesson by answering several questions that are then submitted for review to the assigned tutor. These questions are framed in a way that the student will need to open their Bible and decide what the critical Bible message is.

We are now asking our tutors to consider adding **Learn to Read the Bible Effectively** to their tutoring service. Clearly, the challenges for a tutor on **Learn to Read the Bible Effectively** will be different than on **Exploring the Bible**. With **Learn to Read the Bible Effectively**, the tutor serves less as a content expert and more as a coach. The objective is to nurture the student's use of the skills learned and their confidence that they can be a strong Bible student. We've provided a short presentation on the role of the tutor with **Learn to Read the Bible Effectively** and tutors may now view it on their homepage when they sign in.

The Lord has greatly blessed our work together with This is Your Bible.com. In almost seven years of operation, more than 20,000 men and women have registered on the site and thousands have taken the lessons. We are aware of many baptisms that have resulted due to an initial contact through This is Your Bible.com. It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to bless our work with this new course.

*Thank you very much for your loving support of this important work.*  
Bro. David Jennings, [www.thisisyourbible.com](http://www.thisisyourbible.com)

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*If these lessons be not written in thine heart, then is all the Scripture shut up as a kernel in the shell, so that thou mayest read it, and commune of it, and rehearse all the stories of it, and dispute wittily, and be a profound sophister [debater], and yet understand not one jot thereof.*

William Tyndale

## Addresses for Bequests and Donations

**Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA)** supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Truth Corps, etc. Visit [www.cbma.net](http://www.cbma.net) for current activities as well as to make US dollar donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or contact [jeffandkellie@gelineau.org](mailto:jeffandkellie@gelineau.org)

**Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC)** supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit [www.cbma.net](http://www.cbma.net) for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, Canada, V3R 0J7

**Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF)** supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Ray Pratt, P.O. Box 88, Deland, IL 61839-0086. Website: [wcfoundation.org](http://wcfoundation.org)

**CBMA Overseas Book Service** welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110.  
Phone: 818-842-2868  
[jberneau@earthlink.net](mailto:jberneau@earthlink.net)

**Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee** publishes this magazine and other works on the Truth. P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696, [www.tidings.org](http://www.tidings.org)

**Christadelphian Tape Library.** Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923.  
Phone: 732-381-4590  
Fax: 732-499-8415  
[christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net](mailto:christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net)

**Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation** provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L 4V7, Canada

**Agape in Action** provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to 39 Manor Park Crescent, Guelph, ON, Canada, N1G 1A2 or 521 Valmont Dr., Monrovia, CA 91016 or via website [www.agapeinaction.com](http://www.agapeinaction.com)  
Email: [agapeinaction@rogers.com](mailto:agapeinaction@rogers.com)

**Christadelphian Save the Children Fund** provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy mission areas.  
[www.christadelphianchildren.com](http://www.christadelphianchildren.com)

**Christadelphian Meal a Day Fund of the Americas** funds projects to support those in need in North and South America and the Caribbean. [www.cmadfa.com](http://www.cmadfa.com)

**Christadelphian Heritage College** c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, Canada, N3P 2B1

**Christadelphian Indian Children's Homes (CICH)** donations in US dollars can be sent to CICH, c/o David & Connie Stiles, 3 Blue Acre Rd., Middletown, CT 06457. For info email [daconstiles@att.net](mailto:daconstiles@att.net)

**Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF)** provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF, c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371

**Joy Fund, Inc.,** provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938

**Spanish language literature** is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947. 626-303-2222, email: [jdhunter@gte.net](mailto:jdhunter@gte.net)

**Christadelphian Care Line** fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. 866-823-1039

**Alcohol Help Line** fully confidential help for overcoming alcohol dependency. 866-823-1039

## News & Notices

(Please send in news and notices by the 5th of the preceding month;  
please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.)

### **ANN ARBOR, MI**

We are very thankful to announce the following baptisms. SARAH BILELLO was baptized on April 24, 2011. Sis. Sarah is the daughter of Bro. Peter and Sis. Dottie Bilello and the granddaughter of Bro. John and Sis. Mary Bilello. DANIELLE CAMPBELL was baptized on May 22, 2011. Sis. Danielle is the daughter of Bro. Bob and Sis. Jan Campbell. CHLOE MICHAELS was also baptized on June 19, 2011. Sis. Chloe is the daughter of Sis. Christy Michaels. All three of these young sisters were tutored by Bro. Jon Brinkerhoff in what has proved to be a most profitable Sunday school class.

We are also very thankful to announce the baptism of JERRY EISING on September 25, 2011. Bro. Jerry was first attracted to the Christadelphians by coming home from an 8 am service at the local Lutheran church to see two young brethren, Bro. Seth Michaels and Bro. Bryan Adams, exiting a nearby apartment headed for meeting in Sunday morning attire. Jerry was intrigued that two young men should obviously be headed for "church" and asked them their affiliation. One thing lead to another and we are now delighted to have Jerry as a brother in Christ.

During the past several months we have enjoyed visits of brothers and sisters from many surrounding ecclesias. Our special thanks to Bro. Grant Anderson (Milford Road, MI) for his lecture and exhortation. We have also enjoyed a joint Sunday school entertainment, Sunday school picnic and sister's tea with the other Detroit area ecclesias.

We sadly announce the falling asleep in Christ of Bro. Val Sobczynski earlier this year. Bro. Val was in the process of becoming an out of town member of the ecclesia when he fell asleep in our Lord. We also welcome by transfer Sis. Linda Banta Putnick. Bro. David and Sis. Shawn Bell along with Katie, Jessica and Jaime, from the Milford Road, MI Ecclesia and Bro. Lindberg and Sis. Shirley Van Reuter from the Detroit Livonia, MI Ecclesia.

*Dan Styles*

### **CASTRIES, ST. LUCIA**

During 2011 we have enjoyed the support of many brethren and sisters who have come to St. Lucia. Preaching continues in several locations, but the results are a little disappointing. Since moving into our ecclesial hall we have been able to have some lunch-time study groups with a number of colleagues of Bro. Eddie Anthony, who works at the Central Library.

On September 3rd, we celebrated the marriage of Bro. Mark David and Sis. Alicia Rampersaud. The wedding and reception took place in the ecclesial hall. Bro. David and Sis. Joan Andrews were in St. Lucia at that time and Bro. David performed the ceremony. The hall was full of ecclesial members, friends and well-wishers. We pray that our Heavenly Father will bless them in their new relationship together.

*Martin J Webster.*

## **ECHO LAKE, NJ**

We were pleased to witness the baptism into Christ of one of our young people, JONATHAN NELSON, the son of our Bro. David and Sis. Laurie Nelson on September 10, 2011. We look forward to the fellowship of Bro. Jonathan as we walk together toward the kingdom.

Our ecclesial study day took place October 8-9, 2011, and we thank our Bro. John Parry for his classes during the weekend and for the time he and Sis. Louise spent with us. We also thank all those who joined from other ecclesias to spend time around the word of God. We also thank Bre. Des Manser and James Mansfield for their words of exhortation on their recent visits.

We have been pleased and privileged to have the company of a number of visiting brothers and sisters, and we have welcomed them around the table of the Lord including: Margan Packie, Virginia Packie, Carolyn Antonaccio, David and Maryann Jorgensen (Union, NJ); Eleze Bailey (Georgetown, Guyana); Tom and Sally Davies (Pomona, CA); Ruthann Jorgensen (Rochester, NY); Cornelius Kellett and Deborah Kellett, and Bob and Norley Kling (Washington DC); John and Louise Parry (Leamington, UK);, Sandy and Janice Piskura (Meriden, CT); Gary and Arlene Goodman, Steve and Mary Demarco, and Loraine Reinfurt (Honesdale, PA); Charles Link, Jr. (Moorestown, NJ); Varghese Kurian Trivandrum (India); and Des Manser, and James and Glenys Mansfield (Enfield, Aust.).

*Stewart Marsden*

## **HONESDALE, PA**

On October 23, 2011, we welcomed visitors to a luncheon after our service. They were Gary Burnard and his two daughters, Heather Norell, and Denise Kowal with her two children, Rachel and Ryan. Another visitor was Pat Seipp, a neighbor. The sisters did an excellent job of making the tasty luncheon with the theme of soups.

Bro. David and Sis. Connie Stiles and Sis. Lois Beck (Meriden, CT) visited us on October 30, 2011. We greatly enjoyed and learned from Bro. David's exhortation and Bible study as well as Connie's beautiful organ accompaniment to our hymns. We also hosted a light brunch between the service and the Bible study.

We also placed a poster depicting the Four Hundredth anniversary of the King James translation of the Bible in the Binghamton, NY Library. We hope the readers are reminded of the importance of this Bible placed in the hands of all peoples.

*Stephen J. DeMarco*

## **KITCHENER-WATERLOO, ON**

We are very happy to report the marriage of two of our members. Bro. Josh Robinson and Sis. Amanda Baines were wed on October 15, 2011. Our prayer is that they will be blessed in their new relationship as we all await the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are sorry to lose by transfer to the Cambridge Ecclesia Bro. Paul and Sis. Sue Brokaw.

*Martin J Webster*

## **NANAIMO, BC**

We extend our sympathy to our Bro. Mike Minter, in the passing of his mother, Sis. Alice Minter of the Norwich, Norfolk Ecclesia in the UK on August 29, 2011. Sis. Alice was to be one hundred years old on Oct. 2, 2011. She now rests in the sure and certain hope of the kingdom of God on earth, and resurrection to eternal life.



We would also like to express our thanks to the many brethren who travel to assist us in exhortation and proclamation. Should there be any brethren and/or sisters who are considering a place to retire we ask they consider our small ecclesia. The cost of property and cost of living in this Island location is comparatively low, and the climate moderate. For further information, please contact the undersigned. Also please direct any correspondence to the undersigned.

*Tom Alexander*

## **ORLANDO, FL**

Our small ecclesia has been blessed. On June 25, 2011, Sis. Natalie Ross, daughter of Bro. Wilson and Sis. Betty Ross (Miami, FL), and Bro. Thomas Sanfilippo, son of Sis. Nancy Sanfilippo and Joe Sanfilippo (Orlando, FL), were united in marriage. We pray God will bless their union and give them many years of happiness.

On October 1, 2011, KRISTA DAVENPORT, daughter of Randy and Glenna Davenport, was baptized into the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Krista grew up in the Christadelphian ecclesia, and has attended meeting for many years. We welcome her into the fellowship of Christ.

The following brothers and sisters have visited our meeting over the last few months, including: Phil and Jean Hale (Castleford, UK); Roger and Gail DiZefalo (Granite State, NH); Grahame Grieve (Ringwood, Aust.); Wilson and Betty Ross, and Kit and Ana Ross (Miami, FL); Julian and Sandra Baseley (Guilford, UK); Dave and Lori Pommer (Pittsburgh, PA); Stephen and Betty Lou Lewis (Largo, FL); and George and Vauldry Caesar (Bahamas). Many thanks to those brethren who exhorted.

*Randy Davenport*

## **SUSSEX, NB**

We thank Bro. Steve Davis (Boston, MA) for his study on Corinthians at our Thanksgiving Gathering in October. Bro. Steve was accompanied by his wife, Sis. Sandy, one son, and nephew. We were also able to enjoy fellowship with other brethren during the weekend including: Michael and Ruth Buxton-Carr, Steve and Julie Snobelen, with Jerusha and family (Bedford, NS); Bruce and Pat Waite (Maine); Steve and Bret Harper, with Hayleigh, Rachel and family, Dan and Betsy Demarest and family, and Jason and Deb Harper and family (Meriden, CT); and Jim and Katie Boyko and family (Boston, MA). We also had fellowship with John and Jenn Luff (Cambridge, ON) in August, and. George and Ruth Jackson (Mississauga West, ON) in September.

We are looking forward to our Spring Study Weekend April 21-22, 2012, when Bro. Tim Young (Cambridge, ON) will lead us in a study of, "Hosea".

*Cliff Baines*

## **THOUSAND OAKS, CA**

During the past few months we have been pleased to welcome many brothers and sisters from our neighboring California ecclesias and from afar including: Brian and Lorna Luke, Ruth Olney and Peter Pullman (Brighton, South Aust.); Henry and Sharon Wisniewski (Rogue Valley, OR); Ken and Diane Styles (Detroit Royal Oak, MI); Dave and Nicole Wisniewski, and Dan and Ashley Robinson (Brantford, ON); Dan and Janet McDonald (Paris Avenue, OH); Dave and Eve Bearden (Austin Leander, TX); Amy Cousens (Cambridge, ON); Steve and Mindy Faver (Bozeman, MT); and Tim Edgecomb (Enfield, South Aust.).



Our thanks go out to Bre. Brian Luke, Dennis Bevans and Carl Newth (Reseda, CA), David Lloyd (Pomona, CA), and Bob Lloyd (Verdugo Hills, CA) for their exhortations and afternoon classes. We also thank our Bre. Tim Edgecome, David Wisniewski and Ken Styles for their exhortations. We really appreciate our brethren speaking for us when they visit.

Our special thanks go out to Bro. Dave Wisniewski and Bro. Ken Styles for leading us in our Kids Camp studies on, "Elijah" this past June. Once again we had a wonderful week together with our young ones all having fun while learning the great lessons of God's servant Elijah.

We had an addition to our ecclesial family as our Bro. Aaron and Sis. Molly McDonald became parents of Jacob Riley McDonald. He was born on June 3, 2011. This new little one in our midst lights up our ecclesia.

Tom Graham

### **THE BIBLE MISSION OF THE AMERICAS IS HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE THE PLANS FOR TRUTH CORPS 2012, LORD WILLING.**

The team will once again support the preaching activities in Guadalajara, Mexico, and then travel to Tobago, West Indies, to support the Mt. Grace ecclesia. A two week visit is planned for Guadalajara and at least one week for Tobago (July 14-August 4 approximately). This is an exciting opportunity for any brother or sister who is interested in preaching/mission work regardless of their age or station in life.

As in the past, the ability to speak Spanish is not a prerequisite for helping with the work in Guadalajara and English is the primary language spoken in the Caribbean. Applicants must be at least 18 years of age and have been baptized for more than two years. There is no restriction on older or more experienced brothers or sisters. In fact, the CBMA would like to encourage anyone who is well grounded in Scripture, flexible, and outgoing to join the team, regardless of age.

Leadership for the team will be provided by the Link Brothers assigned to the areas to be visited. Bro. David Lloyd (Link Brother) and Bro. David Jennings will share the leadership of the team while in Guadalajara and Bro. Brad Butts will lead the team while in Tobago. It is hoped that this will be the arrangement for leadership in future years as the CBMA intends to use Truth Corps to a greater degree in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Inquiries should be directed to Bro. Brad Butts at wbbutts@comcast.net or call (303) 984-4646.

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## ***A Subtle Form of Legalism***

*As the new Christian grows, he comes into contact with various philosophies of the Christian life. He can read books, attend seminars, listen to tapes, and get a great deal of information. If he is not careful, he will start following a human leader and accept his teachings as Law. This practice is a very subtle form of legalism, and it kills spiritual growth. No human teacher can take the place of Christ; no book can take the place of the Bible.*

Warren Wiersbe

## Minute Meditation

### If God be for us

The biggest little word in the English dictionary must be the word “if”. “If” changes negatives into positives and positives into negatives. A verse in Romans observes, “If God be for us who can be against us?” Certainly we would like for God to be for us, but the little word “if” makes it clear that God may not be for us, and, in fact, He may actually be against us. God can change from the one to the other. How can this happen? It depends upon our obedience to His will.

For example, Solomon certainly had God for him when he was young and conscientiously obeying the commandments of God. Solomon’s father David admonished his son before he ever became king by saying, “As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever. “Consider now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong, and do it.”

So that big little word “if” determined whether or not God would be with Solomon. God’s help depended upon Solomon seeking God. We know that in the early years of his reign, Solomon did seek God and God really was for him. After Solomon had built the temple as God had commanded him to do, “the LORD appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon. And the LORD said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually. And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments: Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father”

But as we know, the story of Solomon did not end on this high note, for we read, “Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin.” “Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love.”

“And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded. Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my

statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.”

So now God, who was for Solomon, turned against him. The “if” is a very real if, and sadly, God will turn against us also if we turn away from Him.

Not only individuals, but the whole house of Israel forsook the Lord, with disastrous results. Isaiah speaks of the tender love of God towards Israel that ends so tragically. “I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.”

We need to realize that God is only going to be for us if we obey Him. The LORD explains this principle very clearly through the words of the prophet Azariah to good king Asa: “And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.”

The lesson we all must remember is that God wants to be for us and He is not willing that any should perish. But God also will not force us to love and obey Him. If we choose to forsake our God and his laws, then He will turn and be our enemy. This happened to King Solomon and the nation of Israel, His chosen people, when they refused to obey His commandments.

The apostle John tells us, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” If we want God to love us and be with us in our lives, we must show our love for our God by obeying Him. Then the “if” of “If God be for us” will become a positive force for us. Jesus assures us, “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.”

Robert J. Lloyd

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*“If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31).*

*This is the Bible viewpoint. As Christadelphians we resist the unscriptural idea expressed by ‘once saved, always saved.’ The danger arises, however, when we spend so much time disproving the false assertion that we become engrossed in the negative side of things. Then, when problems come, we may find ourselves suddenly trapped in an impotent pessimism, and forget the wondrous positive assurance of this verse.*

George Booker

# Coming Events (Lord Willing)

(Please send in notices at least two months before the date of the event.  
Three months is preferable.)

## DECEMBER 2011

**24-30 Third Ontario Winter Bible School**, Best Western Highland Inn, Midland, ON, Canada. Theme: "The Faith that Works by Love". Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury, Adelaide, AUS): "Jehoshaphat - The King who sought Yahweh with all his heart" and "The Spirit of the Law" (teens); Bro. Stephen Whitehouse (Rugby, UK): "The Message of Nehemiah: Faith in the Face of Adversity" and "Building on the Walls with Nehemiah" (teens); Bro. Jay Mayock, (Hamilton Book Rd, ON): "Loving our Neighbour: A Study of the Second Great Commandment" and "Reasons to Believe" (teens). Contact Sis. Barbara or Bro. Ron Kidd Apt.510, 110 Belmont Drive, London, ON, Canada N6J 4W3 (Tel: 519-690-0391; e-mail: rbkidd@rogers.com; or visit our website: [www.ontariowinterbibleschool.com](http://www.ontariowinterbibleschool.com)).

## JANUARY 2012

**7 Thousand Oaks, CA**. Day with the Word will be held at the Union Hall in Camarillo. Bro. Tim Osborn (Okanagan, BC) will lead us in a study of the "Jubilee". Continental breakfast begins at 9:15 am with lunch provided. Contact Bro. Tom Graham [tom@bigbrand.com](mailto:tom@bigbrand.com).

**28 San Diego County, CA**, Annual Study Day, beginning at 9:30am. Bro. Bill Rawson (Exeter, UK) will be speaking on "Lessons from the Wilderness". Lunch will be provided. Contact: Bro. Kent Ellis, 619 818-6701 or [ellisk@san.rr.com](mailto:ellisk@san.rr.com).

## FEBRUARY 2012

**6-March 2 Palm Springs Bible School**. The speakers at this year's school will be Bro. Joni Mannell (Birmingham, UK) and Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Valley, CA). The School offers a wonderful environment for the mature adult to study God's Word and enjoy the fellowship of other brethren and sisters. To register, please contact Jeff Gelineau at [Register@christadelphianbibleschool.org](mailto:Register@christadelphianbibleschool.org) Or visit our website [www.californiabibleschool.org](http://www.californiabibleschool.org)

## APRIL 2012

**8-15 Australian Christadelphian Conference**, Adelaide, Australia. Theme: "Lift Up Your Heads". Speakers Bro. Tec Morgan (Washwood Heath, UK): *The Exodus Deliverance* (adults) and *Ecclesiastes – Making Sense of Life* (youth); and Bro Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): *Pictures of Redemption* (adult) and *Parables from Luke* (youth). The main studies which will be complemented by a range of other meetings and activities. Full details and on-line registration are available at the website [www.adelaide2012.com](http://www.adelaide2012.com).

**21-22 Sussex, NB**, Spring study weekend. Bro. Tim Young (Cambridge, ON) will lead us in a study of Hosea.

**21 The Canadian Christadelphian Caring Network's Annual Seminar** "Faith Challenges: Caring Strategies for our Spiritual Life". Speaker: Bro Jeff Gelineau (Simi Hills, CA). Site: Copetown Community Centre, Copetown, Ontario.

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